

# **Re-adjusting to life after war: the demobilization of Red Army veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad region 1944-1950**

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**Re-Adjusting to Life After War: The Demobilization of Red  
Army Veterans in Leningrad and The Leningrad Region  
1944-1950**

Robert Dale

Thesis presented for Ph.D examination at Queen Mary, University  
of London

September 2010

**Declaration of authorship**

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and all references are cited accordingly.

.....

(Robert Dale)

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the demobilization of veterans of the Great Patriotic War in Leningrad and the surrounding countryside between 1944 and 1950. This was a period of immense social and economic change, as late Stalinist society struggled with the aftermath of total war. Demobilization is examined here as the processes by which veterans returned home and readapted to peace. Throughout the twentieth century European and North American societies have faced difficulties reabsorbing veterans. In contrast Soviet propaganda heralded demobilisation as a success. Veterans were presented as exemplary citizens and beneficiaries of state support and upwards social mobility. Based on archival research, published sources and oral history interviews, this thesis peels back the multiple layers of propaganda woven around demobilization to reveal a compelling tale of war's aftermath. It examines how veterans readjusted to a civilian life after exposure to mass death and extreme violence, and the challenges faced in returning to a society devastated and traumatized by war.

Veterans expected certain privileges in exchange for wartime service. Entitlement, however, rarely manifested itself in practical advantage. Veterans were not protected from the post-war scramble for jobs and housing. The failure to meet post-war expectations generated enormous resentment. State assistance could never adequately reward veterans. The physical costs and psychological trauma created by industrialized warfare were routinely ignored. Disabled veterans were particularly angered by inadequate state support. Many were marginalized by a society unable to provide adequate support. Not all veterans made the transition to mainstream civilian life; a minority became involved in crime. Violent criminality was not the result of brutalization, but rather the product of trauma and poverty. Although the state was unconcerned by ex-servicemen's criminality, it feared that veterans were a source of anti-Soviet opposition. War transformed veterans' mentalities, yet the majority of veterans were not interested in formal politics.

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## **Introduction**

This dissertation is a study of the difficult transition from war to peace made by Red Army veterans in the city of Leningrad and the surrounding region between 1945 and 1950. The war on the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1945, known as the Great Patriotic War, was one of the most violent and destructive conflicts ever witnessed. Victory was won at an enormous human, social and economic cost. An estimated twenty-seven million Soviet citizens lost their lives during the war. This was a demographic catastrophe. Approximately seventy-five per cent of wartime deaths were amongst men, creating a major post-war gender imbalance. In 1946 there were ten million fewer men aged twenty to forty-four than in 1940. In addition to the millions of widows and orphans there were tens of millions of refugees, evacuees and displaced people. Whole cities were left in ruins. Over 1700 towns and more than 70,000 villages were totally destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Those soldiers who survived the frontline carnage witnessed terrible things and endured enormous suffering. After years of exposure to mass death and extreme violence, returning home and rebuilding an ordinary civilian life must have seemed an impossible prospect. Yet in the summer of 1945 millions of veterans began flooding home. Demobilizing one of the largest standing armies ever assembled was a colossal national undertaking. Between June 1945 and the end of 1948 over eight and half million Soviet veterans were discharged from the armed forces, including three and a half million soldiers by the end of September 1945 alone.<sup>2</sup> For a war-ravaged society re-integrating ex-servicemen and women presented an enormous social, economic, political and cultural challenge.

Over sixty years since the end of the Red Army's mass demobilization we know little about the process by which soldiers became civilians. In general historians have devoted greater attention to questions of how wars begin and how they are fought, than the complex ways in which societies manage the transition from war to peace in the aftermath of conflict. Nowhere is this difference more apparent than in the fleeting

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<sup>1</sup> Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead. The Rise and Fall of the Cult of the World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p.96; Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Post-War Soviet Society: The "Return to Normalcy", 1945-53', in Susan J. Linz (ed.), *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union* (Totowa, NJ.: Rowmann & Allenheld, 1985), pp.29-56.

<sup>2</sup> V.N. Donchenko, 'Demobilizatsiia sovetskoi armii i reshenie problem kadrov v pervye poslevoennye gody', *Istoriia SSSR*, No.3 (1970), pp.96-102; V.N. Ponomarev, et. al. (eds), *Istoriia SSSR s dreveishikh vremeni do nashikh dnei. Tom.11. Sovetskoi soiuz na puti k ravitomy sotsializmy, 1945-1961gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), pp.53-57.

scholarly attention paid to demobilization. In most historical narratives demobilization is treated as part of the backdrop to post-war reconstruction, or perhaps a concluding chapter drawing a line under soldiers' wartime experiences. Demobilization, however, deserves closer scrutiny. Throughout history combatant societies have experienced difficulty reintegrating returning war veterans into mainstream society. In the twentieth century, in the wake of the violence of modern industrialized warfare, demobilizing mass conscript armies proved exceptionally difficult. Many of these problems are still with us today. Veterans of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to face difficulties rebuilding their lives. In any post-war society ensuring that veterans quickly become productive members of society is a matter of great economic, social and political importance. The handling of demobilization not only influences the lives of veterans and their families, but affects whole societies. Demobilization is an important moment of negotiation and contingency between veterans, local communities and nation states, which reveals a great deal about how societies recover from war. This study of the demobilization of Red Army veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast uncovers a compelling history of how veterans and societies came to terms with the individual and collective costs of modern total warfare.

This thesis attempts to address the imbalance in existing scholarship by focusing directly on the difficulties and complexities of demobilization at the local level. Even in a highly authoritarian society, closely controlled from the centre, veterans' experiences of demobilization were heavily influenced by local factors. The demobilization process and veterans' post-war prospects varied enormously across the Soviet Union. Important decisions about demobilization were, of course, taken in Army headquarters, in Ministries and the offices of central political leaders. But the actions of officials at the local level, at demobilization points, in factory personnel offices, and local housing departments all influenced veterans' future prospects.

The thesis addresses two main questions. First, how were veterans reintegrated into civilian society in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast in the five years following the end of the Great Patriotic War? The focus is therefore on the everyday experience of Leningrad's veterans, and their constant interaction with civilian Leningraders, officials, bureaucrats and municipal authorities. It pays particular attention to the problems of readjustment to post-war realities in the most unpromising of social and economic circumstances. In addressing this question the thesis closely examines how veterans found housing and employment, and how they dealt with the physical and psychological

impact of war. Following on from this question, the thesis asks; how successfully were demobilized veterans re-assimilated into civilian society, and how successful were they in resuming ordinary lives? The progress in turning soldiers back into civilians, or lack of it, would have serious implications for Leningrad's, and by implication the Soviet Union's post-war recovery. It provides a opportunity to assess the continuing impact of war upon the men and women who fought it.

At the outset it is worth clarifying my use of the terms demobilization and post-war readjustment. Demobilization is usually defined as either, the bureaucratic and institutional process by which military formations are dissolved following major conflicts, the process by which soldiers are released from the military at the end of an agreed period of service, or more generally as the way in which societies draw down war efforts.<sup>3</sup> Here, we are concerned with the process by which the wartime Red Army was dismantled. I do not, however, use the term in the same way as military or political historians. I am not primarily interested in the administrative process by which military units are physically broken up, soldiers are transported home, are debriefed and released from their service obligations. This is only part of the story I intend to explore. Demobilization is not simply mobilization in reverse. It is more than the moment when citizens pass between the social categories of soldier and civilian. I use demobilization to mean the fuller process by which soldiers readjusted to ordinary life in the months and years following their release from armed service. The experience of combat and the culture of the Red Army fundamentally reshaped veterans' identities and sense of self. The disruption to veterans' careers, family life and personal circumstances would take years to fully resolve. Therefore, demobilization was a social, economic, cultural and psychological process as well as a bureaucratic one. In this dissertation the term demobilization is closely related to post-war readjustment or re-adaptation; the long-term process by which veterans learned to live ordinary civilian lives in the wake of a destabilizing and disorientating war. Demobilization was not simply an event in veterans' lives but a complex process, which reveals a great deal about the difficult transitions faced by all post-war societies.

It is also worth noting my use of the interchangeable terms demobilized soldier and veteran. Both refer to any soldier who served in the Red Army, in any capacity, during the Great Patriotic War and was subsequently demobilized. War invalids, former

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<sup>3</sup> For a fuller exploration of definitions of the term demobilization see Adam R. Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace. Demobilization and the Urban Experience in Britain and Germany, 1917-1921* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp.7-8.

prisoners of war (POWs) and female medical orderlies are all treated as war veterans. However, the specific problems faced by POWs are largely beyond the remit of this thesis. Sadly requests for information about the repatriation of POWs in Leningrad were routinely refused by Saint Petersburg archives. I avoid the use of the term war participant (*uchastnik voiny*) since it rarely appears in documents from the late 1940s. This term started to be used about a decade after the end of the war, and enjoyed widespread usage in the Brezhnev era. The definition of an *uchastnik voiny* was narrower than the late Stalinist definition of veteran. By the end of the 1970s many people awarded medals as veterans in the immediate wake of war were not permitted to call themselves *uchastniki voiny*. The term frontline soldier (*frontovik*) is preferred to indicate veterans' active participation in combat.

The thesis starts from the premise that the history of demobilization and veterans' readjustment in and around Leningrad has been obscured by multiple layers of myth. Officially, returning veterans were welcomed home as heroes, were given extensive state assistance and quickly adapted to civilian life. Propaganda suggested that demobilization was a smooth process through which veterans were reunited with their families, were reintegrated into the workforce and which enabled veterans to demonstrate that they were exemplary citizens. Red Army veterans were repeatedly presented as heroic supermen who enjoyed a special status in late Stalinist society, and made the transition back into civilian life with remarkable ease. According to the official myth Soviet veterans were immune to the psychological traumas experienced by veterans of other conflicts. The veteran was supposedly an ideal type perfectly equipped for the challenges of the era of post-war reconstruction. Rather than experiencing a difficult period of adjustment veterans devoted themselves to rebuilding their homes, careers and communities. They settled into civilian life and blended into the background.

The propaganda image of the heroic welcome extended to Soviet veterans and their successful reintegration has proved remarkably durable. For a country reeling from the material and social costs of total war the rapid demobilization of eight and half million men was indeed a remarkable achievement. However, numerical success has largely obscured the difficulties and hardships of demobilization. Few Russians can now remember a time when veterans of the Great Patriotic War were not a privileged stratum of society. Over time a patriotic cult of the war developed, which enshrined the Great Patriotic War as a foundational moment for Soviet culture. Under Brezhnev war

veterans became valued and prominent members of society rewarded with enhanced pensions, free holidays, travel and other benefits. Each and every year on 9 May, Victory Day (*Den' pobedy*), veterans are placed at the centre of the ritualized celebration of Russia's victory. On that day veterans are treated as heroes. They receive the thanks of local and national politicians, gifts from former employers and the adulation of friends and relatives. Veterans were not always so fortunate. Indeed, in the years following their demobilization veterans, in contrast to the official myth, were rarely beneficiaries of any special treatment.

The central argument advanced by this thesis is that reintegrating Leningrad's veterans after the experience of modern industrialized warfare was far more complicated than either the official narrative of demobilization or the patriotic myths suggested. The disparity between the myth and reality of demobilization was enormous. First, the official stereotype of ex-servicemen as exemplary citizens was often untrue. Veterans settling in and around Leningrad were often poorly skilled rural immigrants who found it hard to adjust to new circumstances, rather than highly skilled industrial workers, or committed party members. Furthermore, veterans were not immune to the forms of psychological trauma experienced by survivors of other conflicts. Many were disorientated by their return home. Others were unable to find work or housing and drifted to the social margins, becoming involved in petty criminality and socially disruptive behaviour. Secondly, the thesis argues that there was no single shared experience of demobilization and post-war readjustment. The Red Army was a remarkably diverse social organization. It included men and women of all ages, social backgrounds and professions. Consequently, there was no such thing as a typical Red Army veteran or a typical pathway to post-war normality. Different ex-servicemen and women faced different post-war challenges, which they responded to in a variety of ways. Finally, veterans were not a privileged social group united by the entitlement to substantial welfare benefits. In Leningrad the limited privileges extended to veterans rarely amounted to a meaningful practical advantage. Rather than beneficiaries of post-war affirmative action or upwards social mobility veterans were in direct competition with civilians for jobs, housing, healthcare and a range of other services. Indeed, for many veterans there could never be an adequate way of repaying the enormous personal cost of victory.

The myth of the Red Army's successful demobilization sits uncomfortably alongside what is known about the experience of other demobilizing armies and

societies. Reintegrating war veterans creates difficulties for any society, but throughout the twentieth century the process of demobilizing mass conscript armies after the violence of modern industrialized warfare proved exceptionally difficult. While Soviet veterans were presented as well adjusted heroes devoted to the reconstruction of late Stalinist society, in the west the standard image of veterans is of disgruntled and disenchanted men struggling to readjust to civilian life. Damaged veterans are not just the constructs of Vietnam War films or literary accounts of the First World War, but are familiar figures from histories of the First and Second World wars. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how the history of the impact of war could be written in Western Europe or Northern America without reference to mental and physical trauma, or the failure of some veterans to readjust.

Leningrad and its rural periphery provide a unique vantage point from which to study attempts to turn demobilized soldiers into ordinary civilians. Studies of Leningrad traditionally consider the city in isolation, treating metropolitan history as separate from developments in the city's hinterland.<sup>4</sup> Here I attempt to examine demobilization in the Leningrad oblast and Leningrad alongside each other. Leningrad, despite attempts to do so, could not be sealed off from the surrounding countryside. The histories of city and countryside were closely interwoven. Leningrad was repopulated after 1944 with rural migrants from surrounding regions. Leningraders were reliant on agricultural produce grown in the land surrounding the city. Nearly every factory, industrial enterprise and public institution had its own parcel of land in which food was grown. Many Leningraders made regular journeys out of the city centre into the neighboring towns and villages to tend plots, find food, visit friends and relatives or to relax. The examination of post-war crime undertaken in chapter five, for example, reveals that crime in the city and the oblast were closely inter-related with offenders travelling between city and countryside to commit offences. It is therefore logical to examine Leningrad and the surrounding region together rather than as separate entities.

Demobilization in Leningrad was anything but a return to normality. Conditions in the city and the Leningrad oblast were not typical of a wider Soviet experience, but rather an extreme example of the violence and destructiveness of modern industrialized warfare. The Siege of Leningrad was an experience specific to Leningrad. Few other

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight. St Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia* (Oxford: Perseus, 2001); Arthur George and Elena George, *St Petersburg: The First Three Centuries*. UK edition (Stroud: Sutton, 2004); Blair A. Ruble, *Leningrad. Shaping a Soviet City* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1990).



Soviet or European cities confronted a post-war legacy as traumatic as that of Leningrad. The ‘nine hundred days’ of blockade left a permanent imprint on the city, its residents and the surrounding countryside. After flying over the Leningrad oblast in 1947 John Steinbeck described a war-ravaged landscape, “pitted and scabbled like the faces of the moon,” and littered with discarded military technology and the remains of burnt-out villages.<sup>5</sup> To this day there are still battlefields like Nevskii Piatyachok, several kilometers south of Kirovsk, where gas masks, shoes, live ammunition and fragments of skeleton can still be found lying around. Farms, factories, hospitals and schools were all destroyed. Whole villages and towns disappeared from maps. It is, however, the better documented destruction of the imperial palaces in Pushkin, Pavlovsk and Peterhof which symbolized the level of destruction.<sup>6</sup> Leningrad itself suffered enormous physical damage. More than 107,000 high explosive bombs and 150,000 artillery shells hit the city.<sup>7</sup> In comparison to Stalingrad, Smolensk, Voronezh, Rostov-on-Don or Novgorod the city survived remarkably intact.<sup>8</sup> Yet, wartime damage continued to impinge on Leningraders’ lives for many years. The real impact of the blockade, however, was measured in terms of death rather than destruction. No city in modern history has ever suffered a greater loss of human life. More than ten times the number who died in Hiroshima died in Leningrad. Conservative post-war estimates put the death toll at around 700,000. More recent research has suggested that closer to a million Leningraders lost their lives. Those who survived starvation and the freezing cold would never forget their suffering, or that of the people around them.<sup>9</sup>

This unique local wartime experience heavily influenced veterans’ post-war readjustment, but not necessarily in ways which might be anticipated. Leningrad’s veterans were returning to a community divided by the legacy of wartime violence rather than united by suffering. Civilian normality was particularly difficult to find in a society in which the shadow of mass death was ever present. As ordinary Leningraders

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<sup>5</sup> John Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal* (London: Heinemann, 1949), p.12.

<sup>6</sup> Suzanne Massie, *Pavlovsk: The Life of a Palace* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> V.A. Ezhov, ‘Vosstanovlenie Leningrada (1943-1950)’, in V.A. Kutuzov and E.G. Levina (eds), *Vorozhdenie: Vospominaniia ocherki i dokumenty o vosstanovlenii Leningrada* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1977), pp.5-8 (p.5).

<sup>8</sup> On levels of destruction in other Soviet cities see Mark B. Smith, ‘Rubble to Communism. The Urban Housing Programme in the Soviet Union, 1944-1964’, Ph.D Dissertation, SSEES/UCL, University of London, 2007), p.48.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the statistics see Harrison E. Salisbury, *The 900 Days. The Siege of Leningrad* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2000), pp.513-18.

were on the frontlines for much of the Great Patriotic War, veterans did not enjoy a monopoly on claims to special treatment and enhanced social status. Veterans' theoretical entitlements were often in direct competition with those extended to blockade survivors and re-evacuees. In Leningrad, perhaps more than any other Soviet region, civilians could claim an equality of sacrifice with, and even superiority over, ex-servicemen and women. Although returning to a society devastated and traumatized by total warfare brought added complexities, there were aspects of Leningrad's tragic wartime experience which facilitated greater understanding between civilians and former soldiers. Veterans of twentieth-century war routinely felt alienated from civilian society, which they believed could not begin to understand the reality of combat and soldiers' suffering. But in Leningrad returning veterans encountered a society better informed about what soldiers had been through. Paradoxically the prospects of creating a stable accommodation between civilians and ex-servicemen may have been brighter amidst Leningrad's rubble and mass graves than in a location less affected by the war.

The importance of Leningrad as a case-study of mass demobilization goes beyond the city's extraordinary wartime story. Leningrad, as the Soviet Union's second city, was at the centre of both Russian and Soviet post-war history. Although some historians have argued that the impact of the blockade led to a provincialization of the city, Leningrad was not a provincial backwater.<sup>10</sup> It remained one of the most economically and politically important cities in the Soviet Union, second only in importance to Moscow. The city proudly boasted of a unique cultural tradition, Revolutionary heritage and the newly conferred status of Hero City. Although the history of the Leningrad oblast is often obscured by that of the city which dominates the region, it was also amongst the most economically important regions in the Soviet Union. Before the war the region had boasted a thriving industrial sector, and a number of enterprises of national economic importance. The oblast's richness in natural resources, particularly construction materials, ensured that the region played a critical part in both the local and national reconstruction effort. Veterans returning to, or arriving for the first time in, Leningrad and the Leningrad region were therefore resuming their civilian lives in a location of national economic, social and cultural significance.

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<sup>10</sup> Blair A. Ruble, 'The Leningrad Affair and the Provincialization of Leningrad', *Russian Review*, Vol.42, No.2 (July 1983), pp.301-20.

The centrality of Leningrad made it a particularly important location in mass demobilization. The opportunity to contribute to Leningrad's phoenix-like rebirth and the opportunities for work and housing in a severely depopulated city made Leningrad an especially attractive destination for demobilized veterans. More ex-service personnel were demobilized in Leningrad than in any other major Soviet city. By 31 July 1947, little over two years since the start of mass demobilization, 268,378 veterans had been demobilized in the city.<sup>11</sup> By the beginning of January 1947 there were a further 53,334 disabled veterans, demobilized and recorded through other mechanisms, registered with district social security offices.<sup>12</sup> Tens of thousands more veterans, discharged in neighboring regions, would be drawn to Leningrad in the months and years following their demobilization. This remarkably rapid influx of veterans after 1945 played a very important role in shaping the region's recovery. The blockade severely depopulated the city. In 1945 Leningrad's population was less than a third of its pre-war level. Although it had increased dramatically by 1947 it was still over a million citizens lower than in 1941.<sup>13</sup> This made veterans an important and highly prominent presence in the post-war city.

There are, however, more subtle reasons for focusing on Leningrad, other than the unprecedented scale of demobilization in a city with an impaired capacity to re-assimilate returning soldiers. First, Leningrad's post-war history was closely interwoven with the course of late Stalinist high politics. Key moments in political history, such as the opening stages of the *Zhdanovshchina* in 1946 and the Leningrad Affair in 1949, had their geographical locus in Leningrad and would provide the political backdrop to veterans' readjustment. How these moments of local and national political turmoil impinged on veterans' post-war lives reveals something specific about the progress of demobilization in Leningrad. Secondly, Leningrad's status as a leading centre of scientific research, particularly in the field of medical science, provides a unique perspective on demobilization. The presence of academic institutions researching prosthetics, military psychiatry and the employability of disabled veterans cast the difficulties of post-war readjustment, particularly for war invalids, into sharper focus. The presence of psychiatric and psychological researchers in Leningrad does indicate

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<sup>11</sup> Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga [hereafter TsGA-SPB] f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.201.

<sup>12</sup> Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt-Peterburga [hereafter TsGAIPD-SPB] f.24/op.2v/d.8230/l.1.

<sup>13</sup> A.Z. Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennoi, 1945-1982* (Saint Petersburg: Ostrov, 2005), p.10.

that war traumas did affect the city's veterans, although the level of support was frequently inadequate. In other places, which lacked this scientific infrastructure, trauma and mental illness were even more likely to be ignored or go unidentified.

There are also personal reasons for focusing upon Leningrad and its rural periphery. I, like countless other historians, have been captivated by 'Pieter', as insiders like to refer to the city.<sup>14</sup> Ever since my first visit to the city to study Russian in the autumn of 2004 I too have been fascinated by the city and its history. Amidst the imperial architectural splendor and rarified atmosphere of Russia's cultural capital I felt the past to be closer to the surface. No doubt this was the product of finally having the opportunity to spend a year in a city which I had read so much about. In between my lectures I had plenty of opportunity to explore the city. I had time to not only visit its palaces and museums, but glimpse behind the grand façades and explore the back streets, industrial districts and the city's less attractive visage. However, the more time I spent in the city the more apparent it became that Saint Petersburg has an ambivalent relationship with its past. Monuments and memorial plaques, for example, located across the city from all periods of its history give the impression of a past which is physically present but simultaneously absent.<sup>15</sup> In Saint Petersburg, perhaps more than any other European city, history has been replaced by a mythologized version of the past. Pieter is a city built on myths. As such it is the ideal location in which to examine the myths woven around the story of demobilization and veterans' contribution to the recovery of late Stalinist society.

Spending time in the city it became clear that several visions of the past are in direct competition with each other. Juxtaposed against Saint Petersburg's rich tsarist cultural heritage are sites of importance in Petrograd's revolutionary struggle, and traces of Leningrad's participation in socialism's grand social experiment. Although the city and its citizens are rightfully proud of their city and its heritage, I felt strongly that a willed amnesia surrounded much of the city's past, particularly Leningrad's wartime and post-war experience. The extraordinary social and cultural impact of the war and blockade is ever present, but at the same time unspoken.

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<sup>14</sup> For example of works which demonstrate a deep affinity with the city see Katerina Clark, *Petersburg. Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1993) and Bruce-Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*.

<sup>15</sup> Julie A. Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg. Imperial Text and Cityscape* (Princeton, NJ., Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.219.

Visitors to the city do not have to wait long before they are confronted with a vivid example of the disparity between the mythic representation of the city's past and the historical reality as experienced by ordinary Leningraders. The first 'sight' foreign visitors being transferred from Pulkovo airport to the city centre encounter, and deliberately so, is the Monument to the Heroic Defenders of Leningrad, completed in 1978. It consists of a forty-eight meter obelisk bearing the dates 1941–1945 and a ring of twelve meter high sculptures depicting the city's defenders which dominates the local landscape.<sup>16</sup> The monument is an embodiment of the official myth of the Great Patriotic War, and the willed amnesia surrounding Leningrad's wartime experience. It is not a local monument to the blockade. The dates placed on the obelisk are those of the war, not those of the 900 day blockade. Rather than an account of the suffering of women and children during the blockade, the sculptural tableaux around the monument depict a largely male story of military glory. Civilians' uncomfortable experience during the blockade is consigned to the sunken courtyard and the underground museum. Yet even the sculptures of young, square-jawed, muscle-bound soldiers are mendacious. These images elide the enormous physical injuries which soldiers sustained, and the manner in which combat had aged and weakened veterans. The official myth of the war, as embodied by this monument, was silent about the enormous obstacles veterans would face in rebuilding their lives. Although soldiers were clearly presented as victors, ex-service personnel demobilized in Leningrad between 1945 and 1948 rarely felt that they had been welcomed back and treated like victorious heroes.

A number of Soviet historians have touched on the role demobilized veterans played in the reconstruction of Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast. They have suggested that highly skilled veterans made a major contribution to the city's industrial recovery, and the reconstruction of basic infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> Where historians have referred to the lives of Leningrad's veterans they have tended to reinforce the notion that ex-servicemen were beneficiaries of post-war privilege. However, no previous work has focused exclusively on the history of demobilization in this region. Historians have tended to be attracted to the remarkable story of the blockade and its legacy. A wealth

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the monument and the decisions taken in its construction see Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege of Leningrad, 1941-1995. Myth, Memories and Monuments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.208-27.

<sup>17</sup> V.A. Ezhov, 'Izmeneniia v chislennosti i sostave rabochikh Leningrada v poslevoennyi period (1945-1950gg.)', *Vestnik Leningradskogo Universiteta, Seriya istorii, iazyka i literatury*, No. 2 (1966): pp.15-21. V.A. Kutuzov, *Vozrozhdenie zemli leningradskoi kommunisty v avangarde vosstanovleniya narodnogo khozyaistva Leningradskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1985), pp.86-91.

of recent research has dramatically broadened and deepened our knowledge and understanding of history's most deadly siege.<sup>18</sup> A wealth of declassified archival material, newly published memoir evidence and a range of new oral history approaches applied by both western and Russian scholars has examined a range of new research questions.<sup>19</sup> This new research has helped inform the background and set the context for the conditions that awaited Leningrad's returning veterans. Yet, since the opening of the archives relatively little has been written about Leningrad's post-war recovery that would challenge the pre-existing Soviet narrative of rapid recovery. There has been no western study of the local circumstances of reconstruction and recovery comparable with those produced by historians of Kalinin Province, Sevastopol or Rostov-on-Don.<sup>20</sup>

The one notable exception to the history of post-war Leningrad is Aleksandr Vakser's book *Leningrad poslevoennyi, 1945-1982* published in 2005.<sup>21</sup> The first section of the book, dealing with the late Stalinist period, 1945-1953, is amongst the best surveys of metropolitan life, administration and government in Leningrad available. Although the book has little to say directly about demobilization it does provide important insights into the society to which soldiers were returning. On points of fact about population, transport, healthcare, urban development and living standards the book makes an important contribution. The level of detail far surpasses the volume

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<sup>18</sup> See for example, Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*; John Barber and Andreii Dzeniskevich (eds), *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad, 1941-44* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). For a review article exploring recent research see, Richard Biddlack, 'Lifting the Blockade on the Blockade. New Research on the Siege of Leningrad', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.10, No.2 (Spring 2009), pp.333-51.

<sup>19</sup> Cynthia Simmons, and Nina Perlina (eds), *Writing the Siege of Leningrad: Women's Diaries, Memoirs, and Documentary Prose* (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); A.V. Vinogradov and A.J. Pleysier, *Bitva za Leningrad v sud'bah zhitelei goroda i oblasti vospominaniia zashchitnikov i zhitelei blokadnogo goroda i okkupirovannykh territorii* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo St.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2005); S.K. Bernev and S.V. Chernov (eds.), *Blokadnye dnevniki i dokumenty*, 2-e Izdanie (Saint Petersburg: Evropeiskii Dom, 2007) and Marina Loskutova (ed.), *Pamiat' o blokade: Svidetel'stva ochevidtsev i istoricheskoe soznanie obshchestva* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Kees Boterbloem, *Life and Death Under Stalin: Kalinin Province, 1945-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); Karl D. Qualls, 'Imagining Sevastopol: History and Postwar Community Construction, 1942-1953', *National Identities*, Vol.5, No.2 (July 2003), pp.123-39; Karl D. Qualls, 'Local-Outsider Negotiations in Postwar Sevastopol's Reconstruction, 1944-1953', in Donald J. Raleigh (ed.), *Provincial Landscapes: Local Dimensions of Soviet Power, 1917-1953* (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), pp.276-98. Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2009); Jeffrey W. Jones, "'People Without a Definite Occupation". The Illegal Economy and "Speculators" in Rostov-on-the-Don, 1943-48', in Raleigh (ed.), *Provincial Landscapes*, pp. 236-54; Jeffrey W. Jones, *Everyday Life and the 'Reconstruction' of Soviet Russia During and After the Great Patriotic War, 1943-1948* (Bloomington, IN.: Slavica, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*.

devoted to post-war Leningrad in the official Soviet history of the city, to which Vakser contributed as a younger man. Vakser clearly knows the archives for this period extremely well. I was fortunate enough to be able to benefit from this expertise. I remain deeply indebted to Vakser for his generous suggestions of *fondy* and published sources of relevance to my research.

Vakser is both a proud Leningrader and a veteran. He has, for example, published parts of his wartime correspondence with his mother.<sup>22</sup> However, despite knowing of my intention to interview veterans, Vakser never mentioned this. Veterans today are still reluctant to discuss much about their wartime experiences and the difficulties of readjusting to civilian life after demobilization. Even for an eloquent scholar the barriers to discussing the less heroic side of demobilization remain. This reticence to discuss individual experiences is also reflected in Vakser's research. Although he has done his best to incorporate the revelations of new archival materials into his work, Vakser, as we all are, is a product of his academic training. *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, despite its importance, is a book dominated by statistics and official information, rather than an interest in the texture of ordinary lives. The choice of evidence and thematic structures creates an impression of Leningrad as a more orderly city than is perhaps justified. Vakser and I also depart in our relations to our sources. Vakser's work on popular opinion amongst Leningraders, and my research into the attitudes of ex-servicemen share similar materials, but we approach the issue from different historiographical positions and with very different results.<sup>23</sup>

The challenges of demobilization and post-war adaptation after 1945 were not unique to either the Leningrad region, or the Soviet Union. Although the focus of the present work is local, the difficulties of readjusting to life after war have been experienced by all post-war societies. European and North American societies, for example, confronted the prospect of having to re-assimilate veterans of extremely violent industrialized wars twice during the twentieth century. After both 1918 and 1945 the demobilization of mass conscript armies had a profound effect on the future development of combatant nations. The demobilization of Leningrad's veterans is not simply a matter of national significance or local interest, it is an important example of the lasting impact of war upon veterans' lives and the difficulties of readjusting to

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<sup>22</sup> A.Z. Vakser, 'Pis'ma soldata, 1939-1945', *Nestor*, No. 6, *Chelovek i voina* (2003), pp.268-313.

<sup>23</sup> A.Z. Vakser, 'Nastroeniia leningradtsev poslevoennogo vremeni. 1945-1953 gody', *Nestor*, Vol.5, No.1 (2001), pp.303-26.

civilian life, something which all veterans experienced. It therefore seems inappropriate to evaluate demobilization in Leningrad in a separate silo. Since aspects of post-war readjustment were common to British, German, American and French veterans, and crossed national borders, there is much to be gained from viewing the Red Army's experience in comparative context. Historians of Soviet veterans have generally failed to take advantage of opportunities for comparison with other post-war societies, something which may help to explain the relative lack of research into mental trauma and criminality amongst former soldiers.

This thesis is not comparative in the sense of Adam Seipp's study of demobilization in Munich and Manchester, or Deborah Cohen's analysis of the treatment of disabled First World War veterans in Britain and Germany.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of comparison here is to stress areas of synergy between European and North American post-war societies, but also to highlight what was unique about demobilization in an extreme example of post-war readjustment.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the thesis post-1945 Leningrad is compared with Britain, America and Germany after both the First and Second World Wars. Comparing late Stalinist society with Britain after 1918, for example, may seem anachronistic, but this chronological and geographical scope helps provide examples drawn from societies with similarly traumatic wartime experiences, which undertook large scale mass demobilization, and from both defeated nations and victors.

Historians have approached writing the history of war veterans and demobilization in Europe and North America in a number of different ways. At the most basic level historians have restricted themselves to examining the logistical and administrative tasks of releasing veterans from the armed forces. This approach is particularly strong in studies of demobilization after 1945 when governments were anxious to avoid the perceived failures of demobilization after the First World War and invested great effort in planning for the troops' return.<sup>26</sup> Closely related are studies of

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<sup>24</sup> Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace*; Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home. Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2001); Deborah Cohen, 'Civil Society in the Aftermath of the Great War. The Care of Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany', in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), pp.352-68.

<sup>25</sup> On approaches to comparative history see Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (eds), *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> See for example Rex Pope, 'British Demobilization after the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.36, No.1 (January 1995), pp.65-81.



policy making debates and the implementation of welfare policies designed to support veterans during and after demobilization. In many nations the benefits awarded to ex-servicemen after wartime service marked important stages in the development of modern welfare states.<sup>27</sup> Consequently the privileges extended to veterans have attracted extensive analysis. Of particular importance are studies of the American Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill, one of the most ambitious and influential pieces of social policy in American history, which shaped economic prosperity, social mobility, education provision and popular interaction with the state.<sup>28</sup> A third approach has been to focus on the development of veterans' organizations and movements, which played a role in lobbying for improving assistance for former soldiers. Perhaps the best example remains Antoine Prost's study of veterans' movements in interwar France.<sup>29</sup> A fourth popular approach is to treat veterans as a special generation forged in the crucible of war. Robert Wohl, for example, has argued that veterans of the First World War regardless of nationality were united by shared wartime experiences and a shared set of values and expectations fostered in the trenches.<sup>30</sup> The idea that veterans were a remarkable generation, however, has been co-opted by patriotic and celebratory popular histories. Indeed, the notion of the 'greatest generation' underpins much of the popular oral history about veterans published in recent years. Little reference has been made to these mass market accounts of veterans' wartime and post-war experiences.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> David Englander, 'Soldiers and Social Reform in the First and Second World Wars', *Historical Research*, Vol.67 (1994), pp.318-26.

<sup>28</sup> Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens. The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True. The G.I. Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington: Brassey's, 2000) and Michael D. Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home. The Veteran in American Society* (College Station, TX.: Texas A & M University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War. 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society 1914-1939*, trans. by Helen McPhail (Oxford: Berg, 1992). This is a condensed version of a larger work in French, Antoine Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants et la Société Française: 1914-1939*, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA.: University of Harvard Press, 1979).

<sup>31</sup> Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998). Many of the works of this type concerning British First World War veterans is part of national collective remembrance and of questionable academic value. For example Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War. A New History of WWI in the Words of the Men and Women Who Were There* (London: Ebury, 2003); Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Second World War. A New History of the Second World War* (London: Ebury, 2004); Max Arthur, *Last Post. The Final Word From Our First World War Soldiers* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

Of greater relevance are works which concentrate on the specific challenges facing disabled veterans. Attempts made by disabled veterans to organize and campaign to improve disability pensions and their social and political position were part of this story.<sup>32</sup> But of particular importance are works by Deborah Cohen and David Gerber which offer a more subtle social and cultural analysis of the difficulties facing the war disabled.<sup>33</sup> The interest in the disabling effects of war upon combatants spans beyond physical damage to include the traumatic psychological exposure to mass death and extreme violence. Military psychology, war-trauma and post-traumatic stress now have their own specialist historiography.<sup>34</sup> Another fruitful approach, applied to Second World War veterans in particular, has been to examine the return of veterans through the prism of family and gender history.<sup>35</sup> However, some of the best research into the demobilization of veterans and their readjustment to civilian life combines all of these approaches, weaving points about the trauma, personal and emotional readjustment into larger narratives of social, economic and political reconstruction.<sup>36</sup>

Against this historiographical background the range of approaches deployed by historians of late Stalinist Russia towards Red Army veterans is comparatively narrow. In the past twenty years there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of research

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<sup>32</sup> James M. Diehl, *The Thanks of the Fatherland: German Veterans After the Second World War* (Chapel Hill, NC.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); James M. Diehl, 'Victors of Victims? Disabled Veterans in the Third Reich', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol.59, No.4 (December 1987), pp.705-36; Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914-1939* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, *The War Come Home*; David Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 2000); David Gerber, 'Disabled Veterans, the State and the Experience of Disability in Western Societies, 1914-1959', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.36, No.4 (Summer 2003), pp.899-916; Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London: Reaktion, 1996).

<sup>34</sup> For an introduction see Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing. Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 2000); Paul Frederick Lerner, *Hysterical Men. War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Susan M. Hartmann, 'Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on Women's Obligations to Returning World War veterans', *Women's Studies*, Vol.5, No.3 (1978), pp.232-39; Barry Turner and Tony Rennell, *When Daddy Came Home: How Family Life Changed Forever in 1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1994); Robert G. Moeller, '"The Last Soldiers of the Great War" and Tales of Family Reunions in the Federal Republic of Germany', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol.24, No.1 (Autumn 1998), pp.129-45; Julie Summers, *Stranger in the House. Women's Stories of Men Returning from the Second World War* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> See for example Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Frank Biess, *Homecomings Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2006); Alan Allport, *Demobbed. Coming Home After the Second World War* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2009).

examining Soviet history after 1945. There was a time when Stalinism was viewed as a continuous period stretching from Stalin's ascent to supremacy in the late 1920s until his death in 1953. Few historians considered Stalin's post-war years as a period distinct from the 1930s with its own specific tensions and logic. Stalin's last years were characterized as the apotheosis of totalitarian control, of interest to only a handful of historians working on the period's high politics, and journalists or diplomats with first-hand experience of the period.<sup>37</sup> Late Stalinism was regarded as, "a kind of bleak desert separating two fertile battlegrounds: on the one side Stalin's rise, industrialization, collectivization, the purges and the high drama of the Second World War; on the other the succession struggle, de-Stalinization and Khrushchev's thaw."<sup>38</sup> However, the view of late Stalinism as a neglected period of Soviet history is no longer tenable. Since the so-called archival revolution the history of the post war years has been rewritten. Historians have asked new questions, and examined new thematic areas, ranging from youth cultures and housing, to healthcare and corruption.<sup>39</sup> New insights have been offered into both high political history and the responses of ordinary citizens to the challenges of reconstruction.<sup>40</sup> The view of late Stalinism as a period of absolute

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<sup>37</sup> For accounts produced by witnesses see: Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal*; Walter Bedell Smith, *Moscow Mission, 1946-1949* (London: Heinemann, 1950); Harrison E. Salisbury, *American in Russia* (New York, Harper and Brothen, New York, 1955) and Alexander Werth, *Russia: The Post-war Years* (London: Hale, 1971). On the political history of the period see Robert Pethybridge, *A History of Post-war Russia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), W.O. McCagg, *Stalin Embattled* (Detroit, MI.: Wayne State University Press, 1978), Werner Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation 1946-1953* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1982), T. Dunmore, *Soviet Politics 1945-53* (London: Macmillan, 1984). On the approaches adopted by these scholars see also Christopher Ward, 'What is History? The Case of Late Stalinism', *Rethinking History*, Vol.8, No.3 (September 2004), pp.439-58 (pp.439-41).

<sup>38</sup> Chris Ward, *Stalin's Russia* (London: Arnold, 1993), p.186.

<sup>39</sup> For an indication of the vibrancy and quality of scholarship see the range of essays in Juliane Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia. Society Between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> On high politics see Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace. Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and Moshe Lewin, 'Rebuilding the Soviet Nomenklatura, 1945-1948', *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.44, Nos.2-3 (April-September 2003), pp.219-51. On the challenges faced by ordinary citizens see Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism. Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Donald Filtzer, 'Standard of Living Versus Quality of Life. Struggling with the Urban Environment During the Early Years of Post-War Reconstruction', in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.81-102; Donald Filtzer, 'The Standard of Living of Soviet Industrial Workers in the Immediate Postwar Period, 1945-1948', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.51, No.6 (September 1999), pp.1013-38; Elena Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy, 1945-1964* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1993), Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War. Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, ed. and trans. by Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); Elena Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo: Politika i povsednevnost' 1945-1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000); Elena Zubkova et. al. (eds.), *Sovetskaia Zhizn', 1945-1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003); V.F. Zima, *Golod v SSSR 1946-1947 godov, proiskhozhdenie i posledstviia* (Moscow: IRI-RAN, 1996); O.M. Verbitskaia, *Naslenie Rossiskoi derevni v 1939-1959 gg. Problemy demografichogo razvitiia* (Moscow: IRI-RAN, 2002).

political control has been thoroughly re-assessed. Although there remains much that is unclear and unanswered about the last years of Stalinist rule a more complicated picture of a post-war society in transition, in which the tensions between state and society were in constant negotiation is gradually emerging.

Despite the importance of the Red Army's demobilization for understanding post-war Soviet society, demobilization has frequently been overlooked as a subject meriting serious academic research. Most of the writing about veterans has been popular and celebratory in tone. The first attempts at studying the Red Army's demobilization were made by V.N. Donchenko in an article published in 1970. This article set the parameters for discussing demobilization for years to come. It equated demobilization with re-employment, and treated veterans' return primarily as an economic problem, rather than a social or cultural one. Donchenko's central argument was that returning ex-servicemen provided the solution to post-war labour shortages, and provided veterans with an opportunity for upwards social mobility. This is an argument which has proved and continues to prove influential, and which I will seek to challenge in chapter two.<sup>41</sup> My point here, however, is that there have been remarkably few attempts to assess the effects of armed service and exposure to extreme wartime violence upon veterans' future lives. Demobilized veterans and the difficulties they faced feature prominently in many general surveys of the period and of post-war reconstruction. However, such works often make crude generalizations or assumptions about ex-servicemen and their social position, based on dubious Soviet research.

There are, of course, some important exceptions. Elena Zubkova, who is often credited with single-handedly resurrecting interest in the late Stalinist period, has made veterans an important part of her analysis of post-war Soviet society.<sup>42</sup> She has highlighted many of the difficulties faced by ex-servicemen in rebuilding their lives, and raised important questions. However, she is not exclusively concerned with veterans, and the points she makes require further exploration. Amir Weiner, like Zubkova, also considers veterans an important social group. He has written persuasively about the sense of assertiveness and confidence that the war generated amongst veterans. Weiner's research is not primarily an examination of the difficulties of demobilization or post-war adaptation, although it has some important things to say

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<sup>41</sup> See Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society', pp.129-56; Eric J. Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction and the Confirmation of a New Elite, 1945-1953* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp.18-22.

<sup>42</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, pp.23-39; Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo*, pp.28-35; Zubkova (ed.), *Sovetskaia zhizn*, pp.308-32.

about the changes war prompted in soldiers' behaviour. Veterans are just part of Weiner's examination of the role war played in reshaping the ideology, beliefs and practices of the Stalinist regime. Weiner's analysis of how identities were reshaped during and after the war is derived from a study of the Ukrainian Vinnitsa oblast. It has important implications for Soviet history, but it has often been assumed that shifts discerned in Vinnitsa were typical of Soviet society.<sup>43</sup> Veterans did, for example, dominate the local party in Vinnitsa, but the evidence that something similar happened in Leningrad and the surrounding region is less convincing. The chapter devoted to demobilization in Catherine Merridale's *Ivan's War* provides the most eloquent examination of the Red Army's demobilization currently available.<sup>44</sup> One of the great strengths of Merridale's account is the manner in which demobilization is woven into the narrative of the ordinary soldier's war. Post-war readjustment only makes sense when viewed alongside wartime experience. Merridale's understanding of violence of the Great Patriotic War and how it shaped soldiers' lives adds dimensions lacking in many other accounts. Trauma and the psychological difficulties of returning home, as one would expect of an expert on trauma, are more sharply focused than any other previous account.<sup>45</sup> Yet, in such a short space it is impossible to explore the subject in the depth it merits.

The first full length work on the subject of Soviet Second World War veterans and their demobilization, written by Mark Edele, was not published until 2008.<sup>46</sup> This book and a number of supporting articles have done much to stimulate interest in veterans and their post-war lives.<sup>47</sup> Edele makes a major contribution to the existing

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<sup>43</sup> Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War. The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War. The Red Army, 1939-1945* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), pp.290-320.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine Merridale, 'The Collective Mind: Trauma and Shell-shock in Twentieth-century Russia', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.35, No.1 (January 2000), pp.39-55, Catherine Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat in the Red Army, 1939-45', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.41, No.2 (April 2006), pp. 305-24.

<sup>46</sup> Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War. A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mark Edele, 'A "Generation of Victors?" Soviet Second World War Veterans From Demobilisation to Organization, 1941-1956' (Ph.D Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Mark Edele, 'Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945-1955', *Slavic Review*, Vol.65, No.1 (Spring 2006), pp.111-37; Mark Edele, 'Veterans and the Village: The Impact of Red Army Demobilization on Soviet Urbanization, 1945-1955', *Russian History*, Vol.36, No.2 (2009), pp.159-82 and Mark Edele, 'More than just Stalinists. The political sentiments of victors 1945-1953', in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.167-92.

scholarship. His analysis has a great deal to commend it. Edele traces the emergence of veterans as a social group and a movement over a period of nearly fifty years. He re-examines the formal demobilization process, explores the circumstances of veterans' post-war readjustment in the immediate aftermath of the war; and charts attempts to create an organized veterans' movement from the mid 1950s onwards. It is a study that is as ambitious in its chronological and geographical scope, as it is impressive in the range of archival sources deployed. However, my case of demobilization in Leningrad concentrates on a shorter chronological period, between 1945 and 1950. In these years, as Edele acknowledges, veterans were not yet a cohesive social group with a collective interest, united by entitlements, a shared sense of generational identity, nor by organized veterans' movements. My research also focuses on different thematic areas. The central strand of Edele's work, for example, namely the intriguing socio-political phenomenon of the gradual emergence of popular veterans' movements in an authoritarian society, hardly features in this study. In contrast, my research devotes much greater attention to darker aspects of the demobilization process, such as veterans' involvement in criminality or individual psychological trauma. These themes emerge as an integral part of the narrative of Leningrad's veterans' readjustment, while they have been under-explored in previous studies. A local study, centring on a region with a particularly extreme wartime experience is always likely to differ from a national narrative, which draws its examples more widely. The pressures and challenges of post-war adaptation are inevitably framed very differently in local and national reports. The local nature of this study and on just the first five years of peace focuses the lens in a very different direction, exploring different themes and asking different questions.

The present study is the result of extensive archival research in eight Russian archives.<sup>48</sup> The vast majority of research was carried out in Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast archive in Vyborg. The general perspective of this research is from the local level upwards to the political centre. Although the present work makes use of national reports its intention is to concentrate upon the local circumstances of demobilization as faced by ordinary veterans. Contrary to what some historians have suggested the late 1940s, at least at the local level, did not witness any tangible improvement in Soviet administration and record keeping.<sup>49</sup> Local bureaucracies, certainly on the evidence of the Leningrad region, were over-worked and under-staffed.

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<sup>48</sup> A full list of the archives used can be found in the first section of the bibliography.

<sup>49</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Conclusion: Late Stalinism in Historical Perspective', in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.269-82 (p.270).

This led to disorganization and even administrative chaos. Consequently, the archival record is often incomplete or confused. The quality of information that party and governmental officials in Leningrad fed upwards through official channels to the central party-state in Moscow was very different from the texture of internal reports. Where there are gaps and questions that Saint Petersburg archives could not answer, I have turned to national archives. As well as containing individual documents illuminating local conditions, national archives provide evidence of the national demobilization experience which highlights what was unique about Leningrad's. Finally, I was fortunate enough to make several brief visits to the *Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respubliki Kareliia* in Petrozavodsk in search of confirmation of rumors about the existence of a colony for war invalids exiled from major Soviet cities. This research forms an important part of chapter three.

In order to offer the fullest examination of veterans and their post-war lives I have examined a wide range of source material, including: statistical reports, summaries of public opinion, letters of complaint, administrative decisions, official reports, party-investigations, court-records, prosecutor's files and the archives of medical research institutes. Since the opening of the Soviet archives in the late 1980s and early 1990s debates have raged about the use, meaning and reliability of the vast range of newly declassified documents. Controversies continue to rage about the comparative merits of certain sources, and how historians should approach and interpret others. Public opinion reports, for example, a source which I make use of, have proved particularly controversial.<sup>50</sup> Attempting to observe historical reality through the Soviet source lens presents a unique set of challenges. There is no such thing as the perfect source. All sources have their own advantages and disadvantages and these constantly have to be weighed up against each other. Rather than privileging one form of document above another my approach has been a traditional one. In the knowledge that all documents have their weaknesses, my aim has been to draw evidence from a wide source base, and then to 'triangulate' between as many different points as possible.

This study also makes extensive use of a number of important published sources. Foremost amongst these are regional and local newspapers, particularly *Leningradskaia*

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<sup>50</sup> On the debate surrounding of new archival sources, particularly public opinion sources see; Andrea Graziosi, 'The New Soviet Archival Sources, Hypotheses for a Critical Assessment', *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.40, No.1-2 (January-June 1999), pp.13-63; Lynne Viola, 'Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s: Soliloquy of a Devil's Advocate', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.1, No.1 (Winter 2000), pp.45-69; Jochen Hellbeck, 'Speaking Out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.1, No.1 (Winter 2000), pp.71-96.

*pravda*, *Vechernii Leningrad* and *Smena*. With the largest and widest distribution *Leningradskaia pravda* was the most important of these three periodicals. More than any other local newspaper it reflected and drove the local political agenda. *Vechernii Leningrad*, renamed and relaunched in December 1945, was a more lively publication containing greater local detail and a less officious style. As such it tends to offer a clearer indication of the texture of everyday life.<sup>51</sup> *Smena* was the local Komsomol organ, and offered a form of reporting aimed at youthful political activists. The research also draws upon a number of less well-known newspapers with much smaller circulations produced by prominent industrial enterprises or party committees in rural districts. These sources, as Donald Filtzer has shown, can offer valuable insights into local conditions.<sup>52</sup> However, as countless historians have found Soviet newspapers are dull in format and style and thin and repetitious in content.<sup>53</sup> As Duskin observes it, “is undeniable that post-war newspapers, and journals, are filled with material that is dismayingly repetitive and even when compared with publications from the 1930s, dreadful to read.” Yet despite the frustrations of working with newspapers they do provide a wealth of revealing material.<sup>54</sup> At the most basic level newspapers communicated official priorities and policies to returning soldiers. The propaganda campaigns waged in the local press attempted to demonstrate to veterans what their responsibilities were in the post-war era. As well as attempting to shape public opinion, the press also provides an indication of what ex-servicemen may have been thinking. Of particular interest are the letters of complaint written to the editors of Leningrad newspapers, many penned by veterans angered by the difficulties they experienced on their return. Although these are far from a representative and unmediated expression of public opinion, they do indicate that the state was prepared to acknowledge certain difficult aspects of demobilization albeit within very strict limits. As Jeffrey Brooks argued the press was not coterminous with public expression, but it did help

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<sup>51</sup> On the style of reporting contained in evening newspapers see Christine G. Varga-Harris, ‘Green is the Colour of Hope?: The Crumbling Facade of Postwar *Byt* Through the Public Eyes of *Vechernaia Moskva*’, *Canadian Journal of History*, Vol.34, No.2 (August 1999), pp.193-219.

<sup>52</sup> Filtzer makes extensive use of factory newspapers in *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.224-35.

<sup>54</sup> Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction*, p.3.



contextualize the Soviet experience and impose a structure on the way that ordinary citizens, even non-believers, thought.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the press I make extensive use of two local journals which published edited versions of the decisions and resolutions passed by the Leningrad city and oblast soviets.<sup>56</sup> Surprisingly, few scholars have made use this rich resource. Both journals proved to be of great practical assistance and a mine of interesting detail. Whereas archives were often reluctant to release records of local soviet and party decisions the published record remains freely available. Specialist medical journals and published accounts of the research activity of the Bekhterev Institute were invaluable in exploring the physical and psychological cost of war in chapter three. These published accounts were of enormous assistance in contextualizing archival records and the complicated language of Soviet medical and psychiatric research.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the thesis makes use of a number of important collections of published documents produced by archives and leading scholars on both a national and local level.<sup>58</sup>

Reference has been made to a number of published memoirs, but these were a less fruitful source than I had initially hoped. Demobilization and the difficulties of readjusting to family life and civilian routines rarely feature in biographies. Veterans were prevented from publishing wartime memoirs in the aftermath of the war. They would have to wait decades for the opportunity to explore their wartime experiences in print. By the time it was possible to publish their biographies, either in edited collections or single volumes, the narrative and linguistic conventions of the Patriotic Cult of the War had reshaped their wartime memories. Indeed, the focus on the war as the single most important event in an individual's life often resulted in the experience of demobilization being completely overshadowed in memoirs and biographies by the

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<sup>55</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture From Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.xiv.

<sup>56</sup> *Biulleten' Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta Leningradskogo Gorodskogo Soveta Deputatov Trudiashchikhsia* [hereafter abbreviated to *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*] and *Biulleten' Iсполnitel'nogo Komiteta Leningradskogo Oblastnogo Soveta Deputatov Trudiashchikhsia* [hereafter abbreviated to *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*].

<sup>57</sup> V.N. Miasishcheva (ed.), *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost psikhonevrologicheskogo instituta imeni V.M. Bekhtereva za 1946 god* (Leningrad: Uchebno-proizvodstvennye masterskie Lenpoligraftekhnikuma, 1947) and E.S. Averbukh and V.N. Miasishcheva (eds), *Organizatsionno-methodicheskie voprosy sovremennoi neiropsikhiatrii* (Leningrad: 1948).

<sup>58</sup> Of particular importance were: Zubkova (ed.), *Sovetskaia zhizn', 1945-1953* and A.Z. Dzeniskevich (ed.), *Iz raionov oblasti soobshchaiut...: Svobodnye ot okkupatsii raiony Leningradskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny: 1941-1945. Sbornik dokumentov* (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2007).

grand narrative of the war. In many memoirs discussion of the war, and its impact on future lives, ends on 9 May 1945 or the day an individual left the ranks. The hardships of the months and years following the end of the war were forgotten. There was no opportunity to consider in print the war's continuing legacy and the tremendous cost paid by veterans.<sup>59</sup>

In comparison oral history offers a more rewarding insight into how individuals navigated the demobilization process. As part of the research for this thesis I was fortunate enough to conduct a dozen interviews with veterans, either individually or in groups, or with their wives and widows. While they are still alive and willing to talk to researchers, as Merridale notes, there can be no substitute for talking to veterans themselves.<sup>60</sup> The shape and texture of this thesis owes a great deal from what I learnt talking to ex-servicemen. The vivid personal testimony, the scorn which met certain questions and the language with which veterans' described their demobilization told me a great deal about veterans' mentalities but also the flaws in my approach. Many of the insights gained from these interviews could never have been gleaned from official documents. Indeed, the process of interviewing and the stories I heard have shaped my relationship with archival sources, enabling me to scrutinize individual documents in different ways.

Oral history is a complicated and difficult research technique. Interviewing is a slow process which requires a sensitivity and enormous patience on both sides. Memory is a complicated process. Memories are often fractured and confused. Recollection can not be turned on like a tap. Old age and distance in time make it difficult for respondents in their eighties to recall their return to civilian life. For decades veterans have been told to forget about uncomfortable aspects of their wartime experience. Individual memories were constrained and regulated by collective myths. The mental barriers to talking about personal difficulties had to be constantly negotiated.<sup>61</sup> The vagaries of memory only partly explain the difficulties of conducting oral history. As a young educated westerner with no military experience a certain gulf, at least initially,

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<sup>59</sup> For a typical example see *Veteran: Sbornik* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1977).

<sup>60</sup> Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat', p.208.

<sup>61</sup> On theoretical approaches to conducting oral history interviews with veterans see Nigel Hunt and Ian Robbins, 'Telling Stories of the War: Ageing Veterans Coping with their Memories Through Narrative', *Oral History*, Vol.26, No.2 (Autumn 1998), pp.57-64; Alison Parr, 'Breaking the Silence: Traumatized War Veterans and Oral History', *Oral History*, Vol.35, No.1 (Spring 2007), pp.61-70. For examples of the results in practice see Alistair Thompson, *Anzac Memories. Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Merridale, *Ivan's War*.

existed between interviewer and respondent. Many veterans, as in published biographies tended to privilege wartime experiences ahead of post-war problems. For most veterans the divide between the wartime and post-war periods was not clearly drawn. Narratives which began by recounting wartime service made the point, explicitly or implicitly, that demobilization and civilian readjustment could only be understood through the prism of wartime experience. The two were inextricably linked and could not be disassociated in their minds.

### **Prologue: The Troops Come Home**

In the early hours of the morning of 9 May 1945 the news of Germany's unconditional surrender began to filter through to Leningrad. It spread rapidly across the city and the Leningrad region. Many Leningraders had kept their radios on overnight in anticipation of an announcement. Others had stayed awake to wait for the moment which they had been dreaming about for four years. Ordinary citizens were not the only ones to have had a sleepless night. Propaganda and agitation officials had been making frantic preparations to celebrate what was shortly to be announced as a national holiday. The streets of Leningrad and provincial towns in the surrounding countryside had to be decorated with flags, slogans and portraits.<sup>1</sup> Political meetings had to be hastily organized for the city's workers and the regions' collective farmers. From five in the morning farmers and workers began to gather in village clubs and workshops to hear political speeches.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 1300 students attended a meeting in the main hall of the Leningrad State University. The crowd had started assembling from three in the morning.<sup>3</sup> Once the political ritual had been fulfilled the music, dancing and drinking could begin. Before long the city centre was thronged with large crowds. Soldiers, sailors and civilians gathered along Nevski Prospect, the city's main artery, and in Palace Square. In parks, gardens, squares and streets across the city other celebrations began, many lasting late into the night. For a brief moment Leningrad was united by the joy of victory. The release of tension, anxiety and emotion would make Victory Day (*Den' Pobedy*) an occasion few Leningraders would ever forget.

That same morning hundreds of thousands of Leningraders serving in Red Army divisions scattered across Central and Eastern Europe were also celebrating victory. In some units peace came as a surprise. In his memoirs one soldier recalled his confusion at the military salute which heralded victory. He momentarily mistook the unexpected shouting and shooting as a German attack.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere the news had been anticipated for some time, and partying had begun several days earlier.<sup>5</sup> Soldiers celebrated in time

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<sup>1</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.48/d.89/l.14.

<sup>2</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.48/d.89/l.8-15.

<sup>3</sup> 'Slavam voenam – bogatyriam. Slava Staliny', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 May 1945, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> D.S. Tsygankov, *Otets: dnevnik maiora Krasnoi Armii: 7 oktiabria 1941g. - 12 sentiabria 1945 g.* (Moscow: Sinteg, 2000), p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp.288-89.

honoured ways: songs were sung, vast quantities of alcohol were consumed and weapons fired in the air. Yet not all soldiers marked victory in the same way. Some frontline soldiers fresh from battle were too exhausted for wild excess. Large numbers of seriously injured soldiers spent *Den' Pobedy* in military hospitals. Confined to their beds they were deprived of any opportunity for carousing. For others pride and joy in victory were balanced by other emotions. Those of a reflective frame of mind had an opportunity to think about the deaths of their fallen comrades, and their own wartime suffering. Many wondered about what their families and loved ones back home had endured, and what would await them on their return.

Victory day released a heady mixture of emotions. In a brief moment of national celebration soldiers and civilians seemed united by a remarkable victory. However, this sense of unity and belonging was largely illusory. Civilians and soldiers were often separated by large geographical distances. Families were still waiting to be reunited, and had little idea when they might see their loved ones. It was the demobilization process in the following months that would finally bring soldiers and civilians into closer proximity. Indeed, in Leningrad demobilization would reveal many of the divisions and fault lines that continued to exist between veterans and the rest of society, which Victory Day temporarily obscured.

The 9 May 1945 is usually understood as an important turning point in Soviet history. It marks the end of the Great Patriotic War and the beginning of the late Stalinist period. To contemporaries, however, the transition from war to peace was far less clear-cut. The moment of celebration had been welcome, but for many soldiers the war was far from over. Approximately ninety Soviet divisions, totalling 1.5 million soldiers would embark on the long and exhausting journey east to fight Japan.<sup>6</sup> In the months and years following May 1945 large numbers of Soviet soldiers would be deployed to fight quasi civil wars in newly conquered borderlands in Western Ukraine and the Baltics. Most of the opposition had been eliminated by the end of 1948, but isolated fighting continued into the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Dangers remained for many soldiers. On Victory Day Tamara Chumakova was serving in a unit disarming mines on the Leningrad front. The work was exhausting and extremely dangerous. Between April

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War. A History of the Soviet War Effort: 1941-1945* (London: Penguin, 1998), p.286.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Burds, *Sovetskaia agentura. Ocherki istorii SSSR v poslevonnye gody* (Moscow: Sovremennia istoriia, 2006); Alfred J. Rieber, 'Civil Wars in the Soviet Union', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.4, No.1 (Winter 2003), pp.129-62 (pp.158-60); Elena Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kreml': 1940-1953* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), pp.191-256.

1944 and September 1945 over 320 of Tamara's comrades were killed. Her war would not be over until freed from this work.<sup>8</sup> Many soldiers would not consider their war to be over until they were finally demobilized.

For most soldiers *Den' Pobedy* marked the beginning of a curious period of limbo, a 'phoney peace' as it were. Once the celebrations had ended and hangovers had been nursed the sense of relief and joy was gradually replaced by confusion, doubt and anxiety. With the primary enemy now defeated the main reason for military service had been removed. The fighting had ended, but the discomforts, frustrations and petty humiliations of army life remained. Military routine, army discipline and separation from families still had to be endured. Soviet soldiers knew nothing about their government's plan for their release from armed service, and when they might return home.

The Red Army was not the only army to experience a lull following the long-awaited victory. The extent of wartime mobilization meant that all armies required time to prepare for returning veterans. However, both Britain and America, mindful of the need to avoid the mistakes of demobilization after the First World War, had begun planning years earlier. In both countries detailed release criteria and a framework for demobilization were publicly announced in September 1944, after many months of careful preparation. British and American plans aimed for transparency and fairness. The United States Army had invested considerable energy in developing a points-based system for demobilization. A draft proposal had been circulated to over 20,000 soldiers; their views were used to shape the final system. Points were awarded for length of service, length of service overseas, combat experience and parenthood. Furthermore, the unveiling of the points system followed closely upon Roosevelt's approval of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in June 1944.<sup>9</sup> In Britain the criteria for demobilization and the measures taken to ease soldiers return to civilian life were published in *Release and Resettlement*, an official guide to the process. The order in which the majority of soldiers were to be released could be calculated from a simple table published in the guide. In essence the longer the period of service and the older the soldier, the earlier demobilization could be anticipated. Soldiers had plenty of opportunity to scrutinize the plan, and familiarise themselves with its finer details well before the war's end. On 12

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<sup>8</sup> Vinogradov and Pleysier (eds), *Bitza za Leningrad v sud'bakh zhitelei goroda i oblast*, pp.97-110.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel A. Stouffer (et. al.), *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, Vol.2 (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp.520-48; Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*, pp.15-24.

May 1945, barely a week after the end of the war in Europe, Ernest Bevin announced to the House of Commons that demobilization would commence on 18 June 1945.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in May 1945 British and American soldiers, unlike their Soviet allies, knew that planning for mass demobilization was in place, that their return home was imminent and that they were well informed about the process and the welfare system designed to support them.

In contrast the Red Army and the Soviet state appear to have made little preparation for mass demobilization prior to Germany's defeat. Although further evidence may eventually emerge from closed military archives it appears that detailed planning for the Red Army's demobilization did not begin until after May 1945. Ordinary rank and file soldiers and their immediate officers knew nothing about their governments' plans for their demobilization. They could only speculate about when they might return home.

*Krasnaia zvezda*, the Red Army's newspaper, attempted to create the impression that in the days and weeks following the German surrender life in the Red Army was gradually returning to normal peacetime rhythms. Although training and political education were increased, there was also time for leisure. Soldiers garrisoned in Vienna, Budapest and Berlin were reported to be visiting theatres, galleries and museums, playing football and volleyball or spending their evenings singing songs of home.<sup>11</sup> In reality the discipline and morale of occupation forces was somewhat different. Violence, looting and drunkenness were more common than an interest in cultured or sporting pastimes. The uncertainty about demobilization added to the tension and decline in morale. Boredom, anxiety and additional propaganda and training created a climate in which rumours that soldiers were being prepared for a future war with America spread rapidly.

### **Demobilization Legislation**

The news that the Red Army had been nervously anticipating finally came on 23 June 1945, just over six weeks after Victory Day, when the Supreme Soviet approved its first piece of demobilization legislation: the *Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozzrastov lichnogo sostava deistvuiushchei armii* (Law on the demobilization of the

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<sup>10</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, p.23; Pope, 'British Demobilization', pp.65-81.

<sup>11</sup> 'Pervye dni posle voiny', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 May 1945, p.3; 'Sovetskie garnizony v zarubezhnykh stolytsakh', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 23 May 1945, p.1; 'Krasnoarmeiskaia pesnia za rubezhom', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 22 May 1945, p.3.

oldest age groups of the standing army). The announcement of the law, as befitted a moment of great national importance, received extensive publicity. The full text of the law was reprinted in all the important national and regional newspapers, sometimes alongside a report on demobilization by the Chief of the General Staff, General Antonov.<sup>12</sup> The official satirical journal *Krokodil* published cartoons drawing attention to the law and the imminent return of demobilized soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Despite the public fanfare greeting the announcement, the Soviet response to demobilization was slow. To put this in perspective five days after the first British soldiers were scheduled to start returning home the Soviet Union announced the legislative framework for soldiers' homecoming.

Delay in commencing demobilization was not the only reason most soldiers had to be disappointed by the announcement. Rather than adopting a points-based system, as favoured by the British and Americans, the Red Army chose a system of demobilization by age group. The *Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozrastov* applied to men born between 1893 and 1905, the thirteen oldest birth cohorts officially serving in the Red Army. Some historians have suggested that older men were prioritized because it was assumed that men with established families and careers would be the most impatient to return home.<sup>14</sup> Bureaucratic concerns, however, provide a more plausible explanation. Demobilization by birth cohort was much easier to administer than a points system. It is doubtful whether Red Army service records were sufficiently detailed to allow officials to calculate how long soldiers had spent in the frontlines or to assess their personal circumstances. Certainly trying to administer such a system would have required a massive additional commitment of manpower and resources, and would have slowed release rates. Decisions about demobilization were rarely made in the interests of veterans. The needs of wider society or the officials administering the process were frequently placed ahead of individual soldiers. This, however, was not just a purely administrative decision. Demobilizing soldiers on the basis of their age had a profound effect on the shape of demobilization and veterans' prospects of readjustment. Younger veterans had to wait the longest to resume civilian lives, something which placed them at a disadvantage. Older age groups returning in the earlier phases of mass

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<sup>12</sup> For example 'Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozrastov lichnogo sostava deistvuiushchei armii', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 26 June 1945, p.1; 'Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozrastov lichnogo sostava deistvuiushchei armii', *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta*, 30 June 1945, p.1; 'Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozrastov lichnogo sostava deistvuiushchei armii', *Biulleten' Leningradskogo polkoma*, 15 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> See the front cover of *Krokodil* 30 June 1945, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.306.



demobilization had more stable family lives and established careers to fall back on. They were also at the front of the queue for the limited opportunities that were available.

In many units there were relatively few soldiers eligible for the first phase of demobilization. One Leningrader, Yuri Popov, recalled the day when the law was announced to the massed ranks of his regiment. The soldiers to whom the law applied were ordered to take a pace forward. Only four men moved.<sup>15</sup> Although mass demobilization had been set in motion the majority of serving soldiers still had no idea when they might be returning home. For many the waiting lasted months even years.

Complaints about delays in demobilization and the slowness of the process were not unique to the Red Army. Throughout the twentieth century the process of demobilizing mass conscript armies was simply not fast enough for the ordinary soldier waiting to return home. In Britain in early January 1919 there were disturbances amongst several thousand soldiers in Folkestone and Dover demanding demobilization.<sup>16</sup> In Germany in the autumn of 1918 and in the months following the Armistice many soldiers impatient to return home self-demobilized, winding up their military units themselves and drifting home on their own initiative.<sup>17</sup> In the wake of the Second World War there was considerable dissatisfaction about the slow pace of demobilization in both the British and American armies.<sup>18</sup> As Stouffer wrote in his classic study of the American soldier; "As demobilization proceeded, critics of the Army in and out of uniform formed a swelling chorus of discontent over the alleged slowness with which the Army was discharging men."<sup>19</sup> There were protests of American troops in Manila, and spontaneous outbursts in Western Europe, India, China and Korea. By the end of January 1946 approximately 50,000 British airmen stationed from Egypt to Malaya had participated in so called 'demob strikes'.<sup>20</sup> Even armies with more transparent demobilization plans faced pressure to quicken the pace at which soldiers returned home.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Na voine spasal iumor', *Argumenty i fakty – Petersburg*, No. 19 (2007), p.4.

<sup>16</sup> Dennis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 1978), p.240.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Bessel, 'The Great War in German Memory: The Soldiers of the First World War, Demobilisation and Weimar Politics Culture', *German History*, Vol.6, No.1 (1988), pp 57-69 (pp.25-27).

<sup>18</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, p.33-36; Pope, 'British Demobilization', pp.71-72.

<sup>19</sup> Stouffer, *The American Soldier*, Vol.2, pp.538-48 (p.546).

<sup>20</sup> Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home*, pp.20-21; Allport, *Demobbed*, pp.41-47.

In the Red Army it was inevitable that continuing uncertainty about when soldiers might be released generated frustration. However, in a highly authoritarian society resentment rarely developed into insurrection. Transports of returning ex-servicemen had the capacity to descend into drink-fuelled mob violence, but there is no evidence of soldiers awaiting demobilization mounting protests.<sup>21</sup>

Unsurprisingly many soldiers were eager to get out of the army as soon as possible. Many soldiers wrote letters home to their wives and families outlining their future plans and expressing their impatience to escape the army.<sup>22</sup> Former students from the Leningrad State University's geography department bombarded the faculty with requests to be permitted to resume their studies. Many pleaded with the head of department to write to commanding officers and ask for their release.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that other specialists wrote to the city soviet suggesting that their skills would be better deployed in civilian reconstruction rather than treading water in the army. Repeated delays and disappointments made the waiting almost unbearable. One veteran demobilized at the end of March 1950, interviewed as part of this research, recalled a feeling of disbelief when he was finally discharged. Waiting at the platform for the train home two of his comrades were hauled back, having been mistakenly considered for release. For the rest of the journey home he expected something similar to happen to him.<sup>24</sup> These were hardly promising circumstances in which to return home and start to rebuild one's life.

Although many soldiers longed for demobilization there were compensations for continuing armed service. Many ex-servicemen would subsequently miss the sense of comradeship and belonging that the wartime army had given them. Small groups of soldiers supported and understood each other in ways which veterans could not always expect from their families or colleagues. Soldiers stationed beyond Soviet borders had

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<sup>21</sup> For an indication of the levels of indiscipline in the Red Army between July and September 1945 see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii/ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History [hereafter RGASPI] f.17/op.121/d.427/l.130-42. On violent disturbances amongst returning soldiers see Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.27; V.A. Kozlov, *Massovye besporyadki v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve (1953 Nachalo 1980-kh gg.)* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1999), pp.60-61; Vladimir Kozlov, *Neizvestnyi SSSR. Protivostoyanie naroda i vlasti 1953-1985 gg* (Moscow: OLMA – Press, 2006), p.152.

<sup>22</sup> E.M. Snetkova, *Pis'ma very, nadezhdy, lyubvi: pis'ma s fronta* (Moscow: Bilingva, 1999), pp.48-51. For a local example see Leningradskii oblastnoi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv v gorode vyborge/ Leningrad Oblast State Archive in Vyborg [hereafter LOGAV] f.R-4581/op.2/d.25/l.92.

<sup>23</sup> Muzei istorii Sankt-Peterburgskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta op.VOV/d.85/l.2-31.

<sup>24</sup> Interview conducted in Saint-Petersburg, 21 March 2008, Disc No.10.

opportunities to interact with a society very different from their own, and also to acquire loot from the local population. In many respects living conditions were better in the army than in post-war Leningrad. Food was often more plentiful in occupied Europe than back at home. News that life after demobilization was tough quickly filtered through to serving soldiers. Prior to his demobilization in 1947 Boris Mikhailov received a letter from his father informing and advising him that: "In Russia there is famine. In Leningrad there is rationing. It's very difficult to live. If you have any opportunity, try and stay in the army."<sup>25</sup> However, he was determined to get home. As another Leningrad veteran, Evgenii Moniushko, put it:

"Although everyone understood very well that they were going back to the hard labour associated with reconstruction and rebirth instead of 'heaven', and that there/ might not be shelter or food, everyone yearned to return home. Therefore, every delay was a tragedy."<sup>26</sup>

It was not until 25 September 1945 that a USSR Supreme Soviet decree set in train a second wave of demobilization. It extended the provisions of the *Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozzrastov* to the next ten birth cohorts, soldiers born between 1906 and 1915. In addition it offered soldiers who had completed higher, technical or agricultural education, former teachers, lecturers, students, people who had sustained three or more wounds, soldiers with seven or more years' continuous service and women, regardless of age, the prospect of release.<sup>27</sup> A third wave of demobilization was announced on 20 March 1946, releasing soldiers born between 1916 and 1921. Further waves of demobilization were on a smaller scale, releasing single birth cohorts and relatively small number of veterans. The youngest age groups might have to wait until the spring of 1948 before finally becoming eligible for demobilization.<sup>28</sup>

Demobilization legislation and announcements were not solely about the order in which service personnel were to be released from the armed forces. The *Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh vozzrastov* also extended a range of benefits to demobilized veterans, which the second and third waves of demobilization reiterated. The legislation theoretically guaranteed demobilized veterans free transportation to their homes, food

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<sup>25</sup> Boris Mikhailov, *Na dne blokady i voyny* (Saint-Petersburg: VSEGEI, 2000), p.442.

<sup>26</sup> Evgenii D. Moniushko, *From Leningrad to Hungary: Notes of a Red Army Soldier, 1941-1946*, ed. David M. Glantz, trans. by Oleg Moniushko (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), pp.220-21.

<sup>27</sup> 'O demobilizatsii vtoroi ocherdi lichnogo sostava Krasnoi Armii', *Trud*, 26 September 1945, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> For a full list of all the demobilization waves and the legislation see Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.23 and Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', pp.62-72.

for the journey, and a full uniform including a set of footwear. In addition soldiers and officers were to receive a one-off cash payment calculated on the basis of length of service and rank. Finally, returning soldiers had a range of housing and employment rights, which will be examined in closer detail in chapters one and two.

Although the state undertook to transport soldiers home the journey was inevitably a lengthy and uncomfortable experience. Just getting demobilized soldiers back to their homes and families was a formidable logistical undertaking. Troops usually travelled in freight or cattle wagons with rudimentary facilities, something which most soldiers were accustomed to. The unexpected delays in journeys caused by the dilapidated condition of the railway network and mismanagement caused greater frustration. Some trains appear to have been abandoned for several days at a time. In such circumstances soldiers often turned to violence or drink, sometimes resulting in mass alcohol poisoning, to punctuate the endless journeys.<sup>29</sup>

In comparison to the welfare payments and benefits offered to British or American troops these privileges were meagre. Worse still the beleaguered late Stalinist state frequently failed to meet even these modest legal responsibilities. Demobilization benefits were not universally applied. Shortages of uniforms meant that many veterans returned in incomplete or tattered outfits. In his memoirs Evgenii Moniushko recalled that in the autumn of 1945 soldiers in his regiment were stripped of their uniforms and footwear in order to adequately clothe those about to be demobilized.<sup>30</sup> Many veterans would still be wearing their uniforms months or even years after their return home. Reports written by Leningrad's military prosecutor reveal that throughout 1945 and 1946 even privileged NKVD troops were often released without the payments, supplies and equipment which they were promised by officers and agitators, and to which they were legally entitled.<sup>31</sup> Similar problems were reported across the Soviet Union. For proud soldiers shortages of underwear and the confiscation of personal property prior to demobilization were deeply humiliating.<sup>32</sup> Even feeding the thousands of veterans passing through Leningrad each day, on their way to be demobilized in other places, created practical problems. There was no guarantee that soldiers would get the rations

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<sup>29</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.23-27; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp.308-9.

<sup>30</sup> Moniushko, *From Leningrad to Hungary*, p.221.

<sup>31</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9260/op.1/d.27/l.122, 137 and TsGA-SPb/f.9260/op.1/d.30/l.76-77.

<sup>32</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii/ State Archive of the Russian Federation [hereafter GARF] f.R-8131/op.37/d.2266/l.61-69.

they were entitled to.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the range of privileges which took shape between 1945 and 1947 started to be dismantled during 1947 and 1948. Indeed, the soldiers released by the last wave of demobilization in 1948 were no longer entitled to even the limited privileges of the 1945 demobilization law.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Soldiers' Return**

On Sunday 8 July 1945 a military parade was organized through the centre of Leningrad to honour the city's heroic wartime defenders. Soldiers specially selected from three elite guards divisions serving on the Leningrad Front marched through Leningrad in three separate columns. The parades began in Kolpino, Pulkovo and Uritsk, heavily damaged suburban towns on Leningrad's southern periphery. They continued onward through Leningrad's southern industrial districts, passing through the city centre, past historic landmarks, and over famous bridges, before parading through workers' districts in the north of the city. The routes were deliberately designed to cover as much of the city and its hinterland as possible.<sup>35</sup> Hundreds of thousands of Leningraders thronged the routes to pay tribute to the troops. The spectacle of thousands of pristine soldiers marching past in disciplined lines was thrilling. The parade received extensive local and national press coverage. Newspaper articles and photographs captured women and children showering the troops with thousands of flowers. Soldiers and civilians seemed temporarily united by the celebration of their combined wartime achievements. Even the heavy police presence failed to dampen the crowds' spirits.<sup>36</sup>

The image of military parades triumphantly entering the city has frequently been confused with demobilization. The myth of demobilization equated these celebrations and the crowds' enthusiasm for the parading soldiers with demobilization. The parade was supposed to be a vivid demonstration of the unity of soldiers and civilians, something which would be continually tested throughout mass demobilization. However, the jubilation which greeted the parades was not entirely spontaneous. It was the product of a well-oiled propaganda machine. Little was left to chance. The route and

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<sup>33</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/ll.92-95.

<sup>34</sup> Edele, 'Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group', pp.121-25.

<sup>35</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7003/ll.94-100.

<sup>36</sup> On 10 July 1945 *Leningradskaiia pravda* devoted three of its four pages to coverage of the parade. See also 'Leningrad vstrechaet geroev-gvadeitsev', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 July 1945, p.2; 'Leningrad vstrechaet geroicheskikh voinov', *Trud*, 10 July 1945, p.2; 'Nezabyvaemyi den', *Leningradskii universitet*, 13 July 1945, p.2. Many thanks to the Museum of the History of Saint Petersburg State University for sharing a newly acquired diary containing the reactions of a student to the parade and its policing.

timing for the parade were meticulously planned. Triumphal arches were erected at the points that parading soldiers would enter the city. A party official was made responsible for decorating the city with flowers, wreathes, slogans and portraits of Lenin, Stalin, members of the Politburo and military leaders. Political rallies were organized alongside each route. Each city district was given a minimum quota for the number of workers to attend. Over 6000 workers were to be mobilized for the meeting in Palace Square. 50,000 copies of a propaganda leaflet were printed, and were to be dropped from aeroplanes or thrown from moving vehicles. The parade and political meetings was to be covered by journalists, photographers, newsreels and live radio broadcast. School children were given the responsibility of gathering wild flowers from the city's outskirts to make bouquets. Drink stands were to be arranged along the route to provide refreshment throughout the festivities.<sup>37</sup>

Four days later, on 12 July 1945, the first genuine demobilized veterans, rather than parading troops, began to arrive at Leningrad's railway termini. The first troop trains (*eshelons*) brought back 1774 veterans from Tallinn and 2001 from Latvia. On 13 July 1307 veterans made the short journey from Vyborg, followed a day later by 1329 demobilized soldiers from Latvia.<sup>38</sup> In the first days and weeks of mass demobilization Leningraders greeted returning soldiers with great enthusiasm. The same pomp and circumstance which characterized the military parades on 8 July were extended to the first homecoming veterans. Cheering women and children clutching bouquets crowded the platforms of Leningrad's railway stations anxious to be reunited with their loved ones. The reception of demobilized troops, at least in the early stages, was carefully orchestrated. Frantic preparations had been made to ensure that railway stations were ready for returning heroes. Platforms and the battered trains which brought soldiers back were bedecked with flowers, posters, propaganda slogans and portraits of Stalin. Local Komsomol cells were mobilized to make the necessary arrangements and decorate railway platforms.<sup>39</sup> Once again newspaper reporters and photographers were there to document the celebrations and the preparations made to welcome returning

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<sup>37</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7003/l.94-100. Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.113-14.

<sup>38</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.75.

<sup>39</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.5/d.232/l.16-17; 'Vstrechaem dorogikh voynov', *Smena*, 16 July 1945, p.2.

heroes.<sup>40</sup> Similar, albeit more modest festivities, were organized in provincial towns across the Leningrad oblast.



**Figure 1: Leningraders meet the first troop *eshelons* of demobilized veterans arriving in the city.<sup>41</sup>**

Returning soldiers in the first weeks of mass demobilization were hit by the full force of the Soviet propaganda machine. In theory every effort was made to greet ex-servicemen in a manner befitting returning heroes. All returning *eshelons* were supposed to be greeted by delegations of between 500 and 1000 workers and a brass

<sup>40</sup> 'Voiny protivovozdushnoi oborony vozvratilis' v rodnoi Leningrad', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 17 July 1945, p.1; 'Eschelon prishel iz Berlina... Leningradtsy vstrechaiut voinov pobediteli', *Smena*, 1 August 1945, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Downloaded from Archivy Rossii web project 'Pobeda 1941-1945'  
[http://victory.rusarchives.ru/index.php?p=31&photo\\_id=422](http://victory.rusarchives.ru/index.php?p=31&photo_id=422) (last accessed 9 July 2010).

band. Special rostrums were built at railway termini to provide a platform for party and soviet dignitaries and agitators. Arriving troops were treated to short political meetings, speeches from important local figures and a short explanation of the rest of the demobilization process.<sup>42</sup> On occasion the subjects of these speeches are preserved in the archival record. In Volkhov party secretary Teren appeared before demobilized troops with a lecture entitled, “The town of Volkhov during the Patriotic War.” His colleague party secretary Mikhailov gave a talk on “Volkhov district – active help for the front.”<sup>43</sup> Ex-servicemen arriving in Leningrad’s Sverdlov district heard similar speeches designed to remind *frontoviki* of the contribution of Leningrad’s civilian war effort, and allay potential friction between civilians and veterans.<sup>44</sup> National and local propagandists made a genuine effort to demonstrate that returning veterans were welcomed home as heroes. The central party propaganda apparatus issued directives encouraging local and regional newspapers to report on the celebrations welcoming troops home, and demonstrate that veterans were reintegrating well.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, having been warmly welcomed home and reminded of their future responsibilities, returning veterans passed through demobilization points. Detailed preparations were made to ensure that reception points were well equipped and veterans would be able to complete the necessary paperwork quickly and inefficiently. In a report written on 18 July 1945 Trakhachev, head of the Party Military Department, calculated that it would take between fifty and eighty minutes to draw up most soldiers’ civilian documents. In addition to being issued with the relevant military paperwork veterans were to be given passports, ration cards and tokens which could be redeemed for vodka and tobacco.<sup>46</sup> In theory veterans were now free to re-enter ordinary civilian life. In the long-term, however, predictions that soldiers would pass through demobilization points smoothly and efficiently, and quickly readjust to life outside the army, proved over optimistic.

The propaganda campaign implemented in the first weeks and months of mass demobilization is responsible for one of the most enduring myths about veterans’

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<sup>42</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.88.

<sup>43</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.471/l.88.

<sup>44</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/l.35.

<sup>45</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.147/l.181-82.

<sup>46</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.88ob.



demobilization, namely that soldiers were welcomed home to universal acclaim, were smoothly reintegrated and quickly readjusted. The propaganda campaign surrounding soldiers' return proved remarkably successful, shaping the way that demobilization has been viewed ever since. Images of veterans reunited with their families on railway platforms or parading through Palace Square or Nevskii Prospect have become synonymous with demobilization. Men like Gapaniuk, an infantryman demobilized in Leningrad's Primorskii district were the lucky ones. He understood and appreciated his good fortune:

"I fought in frontline positions for four years. I lived in dugouts and trenches. I had to experience a lot of hardships. Now I have returned to my hometown to my beloved family. At home I found everything in order. I was warmly met at the reception point. It all goes to create a good kindly feeling. I will relax a little and then return to work."<sup>47</sup>

Most ex-servicemen and women, however, did not receive a hero's welcome. Many soldiers did not have families to return to, who could help them readjust. A large number of Leningraders serving in the Red Army had lost their entire families during the siege. Others found that their relatives were as yet unable to return from re-evacuation. Soldiers who returned at the start of a new demobilization wave were more likely to receive an organized reception. But ordinary Leningraders soon tired of ceremonies to welcome home soldiers. Once the initial novelty of demobilization wore off ex-servicemen were met with less fanfare and eventually with silence. Even those who were welcomed home warmly soon learnt that demobilization was not all bunting and brass bands.

Amongst the veterans attempting to rebuild their lives in Leningrad were many new arrivals with no roots and no family ties in the region. Veterans were not entirely static following their demobilization. In theory ex-servicemen were supposed to return to the place in which they had volunteered or had been conscripted. In practice many exploited opportunities to move to other cities and regions. Many veterans arrived in Leningrad not on troop *echelons*, but on civilian trains from the places where they had previously been demobilized. They too were unlikely to receive the warm welcome extended to the first veterans arriving in Leningrad. In contrast to the heroic myth there was no shared experience of demobilization. Different groups of soldiers had very different experiences of taking their first steps towards civilian life.

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<sup>47</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7003/1.103.

### **Disabled Veterans**

Disabled veterans were largely excluded from the celebrations and propaganda circus of the first few weeks of mass demobilization. Large numbers of soldiers considered unfit for further military service had been discharged from the Red Army on medical grounds long before the announcement of mass demobilization. Indeed, they were amongst the first soldiers to have the opportunity to return to civilian life. Their return during the war, however, was in very different circumstances to either their able-bodied comrades released through mass demobilization, or fellow war invalids released from military hospitals after May 1945. First, war invalids did not return in dedicated troop transports exclusively for military use, but were required to make their way home under their own initiative in smaller groups or sometimes on their own. Given that many disabled veterans were still struggling to adjust to a loss of mobility, the journey on crowded civilian trains could be an ordeal. Secondly, war invalids were not welcomed back by cheering crowds and were not immediately surrounded by frantic agitation work. In many ways their return was anonymous. Finally, there was a significant gap between the experiences of war invalids demobilized before and after the summer of 1945. During the war disabled veterans enjoyed a relatively high status.<sup>48</sup> For civilians they served as an important channel of information about life of the frontlines and an emotional connection with the friends and relatives serving in the army. With manpower at a premium many war invalids enjoyed reasonable employment prospects. Once the war ended war invalids arriving in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast received a far less satisfying reception. With the start of mass demobilization in July 1945 injured and disfigured former soldiers were displaced from the pantheon of heroes and disappeared from the official commemoration of the war. Worse still many disabled veterans would be replaced in their jobs by able-bodied veterans, and they would be made to feel increasingly unwelcome.

### **Women Veterans and Technical Specialists**

The war disabled were not the only group of soldiers to be demobilized before the start of mass demobilization, or outside the framework of the *Zakon o demobilizatsii*. Women in particular appear to have been viewed as something of a

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<sup>48</sup> Beate Fieseler, 'The bitter legacy of the "Great Patriotic War"'. Red Army disabled soldiers under late Stalinism', in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.46-61 (pp.51-52); Masha Gessen, *Two Babushkas. How My Grandmothers Survived Hitler's War and Stalin's Peace* (Bloomsbury: London, 2005), pp.136-37.

special case, meriting earlier release from the military. On 5 November 1944, approximately nine months before the first *eshelons* of demobilized veterans began arriving in Leningrad, a secret report discussed the possibility of demobilizing between 700 and 800 women from active service on the Leningrad front.<sup>49</sup> It is unclear why this decision was taken. Military commanders may have considered that as the war approached its final stages women were no longer needed. Alternatively, women may have been viewed as an unwelcome or disruptive presence in the military. Although the numbers were relatively small other fronts may also have taken steps to reduce the number of women soldiers well before the war's end. However, the early demobilization of women may have been a local innovation. Nationally women were not given privileged rights for demobilization until the announcement of the second wave of demobilization at the end of September 1945. Despite lingering misogynistic fears about the place of women in the Red Army their skills could not be dispensed with immediately. Indeed as the Red Army was often reliant on women to fulfil medical, technical jobs and ancillary services this may have even acted as an obstacle to their demobilization.

In contrast highly skilled technical specialists serving in the Red Army, usually men, had the enhanced prospect of being pushed up the demobilization queue. If the skills of an individual soldier or officer were sufficiently important the usual demobilization mechanisms could be circumvented. The Leningrad city soviet, and institutions under its control, barraged army headquarters and commanding officers with hundreds of requests to release highly skilled workers considered essential for post-war reconstruction and the normal functioning of the city. Requests were made to demobilize road-builders, staff from the State Hermitage Museum, the former director of *Lenzhilsnab*, one of Leningrad's leading housing construction trusts, as well as architects and restoration workers with the specialist knowledge to restore the city's architectural treasures.<sup>50</sup> On 13 July 1946, for example, Basov, one of several deputy chairman of the Leningrad soviet, wrote to Chief Commander of Central Army Group requesting that Vladimir Lodukhin was demobilized. Before the war Lodukhin had worked as the director of museums, palaces and parks in Pushkin, and had helped supervise the evacuation of valuables from Leningrad's palaces and museums. His

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<sup>49</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53a/d.90/l.59 reprinted in Dzeniskevich (ed.), *Iz rainov oblasti soobshchaiut...*, pp.503-4.

<sup>50</sup> TsGA-SPb/op.17/d.1519/l.87,88,156,175,197.

experience was considered invaluable in the mammoth task of rebuilding the Catherine Palace, and evacuating valuable cultural artefacts.<sup>51</sup>

These alternative mechanisms were not comparable with the measures implemented by other armies to prioritize the release of key workers. In Britain, for example, Class B demobilization was introduced to release managers, technicians and overseas salesmen (who all made an important contribution to labour creation), as well as teachers, students and skilled manufacturing, mining and agricultural workers. Approximately ten per cent of British veterans were demobilized under these regulations.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the Leningrad soviet requested the demobilization of at most a thousand soldiers. This then was an ad-hoc local solution to specific problems, rather than a permanent arrangement sanctioned from the centre.

### **POWs**

Finally, one further group of former soldiers had a very different experience of demobilization compared to that of the veterans who stepped off trains to universal applause and acclaim. At the end of the war the Soviet repatriation administration had record of 2,016,480 POWs, 1,836,562 of whom were eventually repatriated.<sup>53</sup> Returning POWs were deprived of any public celebration or recognition of either their wartime sacrifices or their contribution to victory. In the majority of cases ordinary soldiers were captured fulfilling their military duty and through no fault of their own. But the notorious wartime order number 270, which branded captured soldiers traitors, stigmatized POWs, and resulted in them being treated like criminals. At best official policy towards POWs was suspicious, at worst it was hostile. Returning POWs were not welcomed home by their government. Instead they were subjected to a process known as filtration (*filtratsiia*), by which they were screened for participation in the Vlasovite Russia Liberation Army, possible collaboration in POW camps and possible anti-Soviet activity.

Leningrad's borderland position made it an important location in the repatriation of POWs. Its proximity to Finland and the Baltics ensured a steady flow of repatriated soldiers and civilians. The filtration system consisted of two tiers: Verification-Filtration points and Verification-Filtration Camps. The Leningrad oblast had one main

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<sup>51</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.215/l.66.

<sup>52</sup> Pope, 'British Demobilization', pp.68-71; Allport, *Demobbed*, pp.23-24.

<sup>53</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.102.

filtration point, located in Vyborg, established in October 1944 which was amongst the busiest in the entire Soviet Union. In 1944 approximately 45,000 repatriated Soviet citizens passed through filtration points in the Leningrad region. This represented about forty-six per cent of the total number of Soviet repatriates for 1944.<sup>54</sup> Between the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 the Vyborg filtration point was receiving between 2000 and 5000 repatriates every day.<sup>55</sup> The Leningrad oblast boasted two filtration camps. Camp No.317 was established in January 1945 in the village of Nevdubstoi, located on the October railway to the East of Leningrad close to Kirovsk. Camp No.323 was opened in April 1945 at Kotly, a village near the Estonian border, also with railway links. These are reputed to have been amongst the largest filtration camps in the entire Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> It is unclear how many POWs arriving in the Leningrad region were transferred from filtration points to filtration camps. At a national level somewhere between sixty-one and sixty-seven per cent of returning POWs were transferred from one to the other.<sup>57</sup> There were of course local variations in practice. The Tosnenskii district NKVD department, for example, sent all returning POWs to filtration camps regardless of individual circumstances.<sup>58</sup>

The filtration process was one of the most vivid demonstrations of the repressive power of the late Stalinist state. On crossing the Soviet border former POWs fell under immediate suspicion, regardless of the circumstances of their capture or their conduct in captivity. Fresh from suffering in Nazi concentration camps many POWs found that one camp regime was replaced by another. Conditions were little different from either the Gulag or the camps in which German POWs were imprisoned. Filtration camp inmates were forced labourers in all but name. Whilst undergoing the humiliation of interrogation and investigation at night, former POWs were expected to work

<sup>54</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.9401/op.2/d.92/l.6-8 published in V.N. Khastov, V.P. Naumov, and N.S. Plotnikova (eds), *Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD - RKGB - GUKP - "SMERSH". 1939 - Mart 1946* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo materik, 2006), pp.485-86.

<sup>55</sup> I.V. Govorov, 'Proverochno-fil'tratsionnye organy v sisteme NKVD 1944-1946 gg. (po materialam Leningradskoi oblasti)', in Viktor Petrovich Sal'nokov (ed.), *Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del: stranitsy istorii [1802-2002 gg.]* (Saint Petersburg: Saint-Peterburgskii Universitet MVD Rossii, 2001), pp.474-95 (p.482).

<sup>56</sup> Govorov, 'Proverochno-fil'tratsionnye organy', p.480, 484; V.A. Ivanov, *Missiia ordena. Mekhanizm massovykh repressii v Sovetskoi Rossii v kontse 20-kh - 40-kh gg. (na materialakh Severo-Zapada RSFSR)* (Saint-Petersburg: LISS, 1997), p.301. Ivanov, however, makes factual errors. He suggests that filtration camp No.316 was also based in the Leningrad region, in fact it was located near Tallinn, and he suggests that camp No.323 was located in Bereven'ka near to the town of Slantsy.

<sup>57</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.103.

<sup>58</sup> Govorov, 'Proverochno-fil'tratsionnye organy', p.485.

exhausting eleven hour days. Both of the Leningrad oblast's camps used former POWs for reconstruction projects. Camp No.323 deployed prisoners in the reconstruction of the October railway line and construction projects for the Baltic Fleet. Inmates of camp No.317 played a crucial role in the reconstruction of the Dubrovskaja power-station.<sup>59</sup> Filtration camps appear to have been deliberately located near important industrial centres or enterprises in order that former POWs could contribute to reconstruction.<sup>60</sup> However, the real purpose of filtration camps remained rooting out supposed traitors and collaborators. According to figures cited by one historian between January and March 1946 a total of 12,351 individuals passed through these two filtration camps. 507 former POWs were arrested and 3108 sentenced to special exile for periods of at least six years.<sup>61</sup>

Although there was much that was shameful about the treatment of returning POWs in the Leningrad oblast, the filtration system appears to have been marginally less repressive than some historians have imagined. As Mark Edele has noted historians have often exaggerated the violence of filtration: "Stressing the arbitrariness of the process of filtration, some accounts leave the reader with the impression that the typical experience was the bullet in the head or the life of a concentration camp inmate (*zek*) in Stalin's Gulag."<sup>62</sup> This was often not the case. Rank and file soldiers, for example, were treated more leniently than former officers. Given the level of violence the Stalinist state was capable of, the number of POWs killed or arrested as a result of filtration was surprisingly low.

Yet even POWs who passed through filtration points and camps relatively easily, found that the stain upon their character was not removed. Suspicion hung over repatriated citizens for the rest of their lives. Returning POWs were required to register with local NKVD offices within days of their arrival, where they remained on surveillance lists. Former POWs clearing filtration were also prevented from living in major Soviet cities. Several thousand native Leningraders, perhaps even tens of thousands, who had found themselves in enemy captivity, were unable to return to their

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<sup>59</sup> Govorov, 'Proverochno-fil'tratsionnie organy', p.486; Ivanov, *Missiia ordena*, p.302,454.

<sup>60</sup> Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p.395; Galina Ivanova, *Labour Camp Socialism. The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System* (Armonk, NY., London: M.E.Sharpe, 2000), p.43.

<sup>61</sup> Govorov, 'Proverochno-fil'tratsionnie organy', p.489.

<sup>62</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.103.

homes and families. In effect they were displaced by their own state. Employers, perhaps mindful of being accused of insufficient vigilance, were reluctant to hire former POWs. Between 1944 and 1947 repatriated POWs were treated like second class citizens. They did, however, enjoy many of the theoretical privileges extended to demobilized veterans. But in 1947 the political atmosphere changed. No official policy shift was announced, but the political centre stopped sending positive signals about the desirability of reintegrating repatriates and stopped enforcing the legal rights of former POWs. Very quickly former POWs were subject to greater surveillance, frequent harassment and the increased risk of arrest.<sup>63</sup>

The specific problems facing the reintegration of former POWs in the Leningrad region are largely beyond the scope of this thesis. In part this reflects the ruling that former POWs were not permitted to live within a 100 kilometre zone of Leningrad. Although former POWs undoubtedly slipped through this cordon, the total number living in the region was relatively low. The comparative lack of discussion about the prospects of assimilating POWs also reflects the limits of current archival access. While I was permitted to pursue research about veterans, requests for files relating specifically to POWs were routinely rejected. Local archivists steadfastly maintained that POWs and veterans were very different social constituencies, rather than overlapping groups. In administrative terms this is true. It was not until the breakdown of the Soviet Union that the last obstacles to the rehabilitation of POWs were finally removed. Legal recognition that POWs were ‘war participants’ on an equal footing with other veterans was only granted in 1995.<sup>64</sup> Archival practice has tended to group documents about demobilized veterans and former POWs in different parts of the archive. Furthermore, in an era when the old patriotic narratives of the Great Patriotic War are being reasserted the repressive treatment of POWs at the local level is a particularly sensitive issue. As the official memory of the war once again tightens and becomes a symbol of national pride documents describing the harassment of former POWs are unlikely to be declassified.

### **Demobilization Statistics**

The return of veterans to Leningrad and the surrounding region had taken time to organise and started slowly. What began as a trickle would rapidly become a torrent.

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<sup>63</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.102-28; Govorov, ‘Proverochno-fil’tratsionnie organy’, p.491-95.

<sup>64</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.128.

From mid July 1945 onwards thousands of soldiers began arriving in the city of Leningrad on an almost daily basis. The scale and pace of demobilization was impressive. By 31 July 1947, the last available set of figures, a total of 268,376 veterans had been demobilized in Leningrad.<sup>65</sup> By 1 January 1947 a further 47,618 soldiers had been demobilized in the Leningrad oblast.<sup>66</sup> The number of veterans demobilized in the Leningrad oblast was significantly lower than in other comparable regions. The locally generated figures, however, suggest that more veterans were demobilized in Leningrad than any other major Soviet city. 246,218 veterans had been demobilized in Leningrad by 1 January 1947, compared to 212,866 in Moscow, 44,571 in Kiev and 32,571 in Gorkii.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, these figures underestimate the total number of veterans settling in Leningrad. They exclude disabled veterans, former POWs and migrants not recorded amongst the soldiers passing through demobilization points. On 1 May 1946 there were an additional 48,643 war invalids registered with district social security officers in Leningrad, Petrodorets, Kolpino, Pushkin and Kronstadt.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately there are no reliable figures for the number of Red Army veterans who chose to migrate to either Leningrad or the Leningrad oblast in the months and years following their demobilization. As they were not demobilized in Leningrad they were not counted. Since many were arriving without permission or paperwork they went reluctant to make themselves too visible to local administrators. Similarly, there are no readily available statistics for the number of POWs returning to the Leningrad region. Presumably most of the material documenting the supervision and surveillance of POWs is preserved in closed FSB archives. Although, the total number of Red Army veterans, in the broadest definition of the word, can never be fully established, former soldiers were a highly prominent presence in the post-war city. Given the reduction in Leningrad's population they represented approximately ten to fifteen percent of the city's total population.

The dynamics of demobilization in Leningrad were also different from the national picture. According to Donchenko's research a staggering forty per cent of all soldiers released during mass demobilization returned between July and September

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<sup>65</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208.

<sup>66</sup> Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', p.585.

<sup>67</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.104; Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', pp.585-86.

<sup>68</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/l.43.



1945 as part of the first wave of demobilization.<sup>69</sup> In comparison, 45,770 soldiers had been demobilized in Leningrad by 1 October 1945, the approximate end of the first demobilization wave. This amounted to just seventeen per cent of the total number demobilized in the city. Although the pace of demobilization quickened in the summer of 1945, it was not until the autumn of 1945 that the process reached full capacity. 45,000 soldiers were demobilized in November 1945; approximately the same number as the first three months of mass demobilization.<sup>70</sup> Throughout the last quarter of 1945 and the whole of 1946 demobilization in Leningrad progressed at a steady rate. By January 1947 the bulk of demobilizing veterans had been completed. Only 22,160 veterans, just eight per cent of the total, were demobilized in Leningrad between January and July 1947.<sup>71</sup>

As far as the military were concerned demobilization was achieved when soldiers left the army and returned home. However, the difficulties of readjusting to civilian life were only just beginning. Demobilized veterans returned as victors, but they would have to fight further battles to find their place in post-war society. While the number of soldiers who returned to the region represented only a fraction of those who volunteered to fight or who were conscripted, re-assimilating so many veterans in such a compressed period of time created enormous social pressures. Just as different veterans had different experiences of returning home, not all veterans readjusted to civilian life with equal success.

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<sup>69</sup> Donchenko, 'Demobilizatsiia sovetskoi armii', p.98.

<sup>70</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.1520/l.23.

<sup>71</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.2261/l.104; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208.

## **Chapter 1: “Homes for Heroes”: Veterans and the Post-war Housing Crisis**

Re-housing the hundreds of thousands of veterans arriving in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast represented one of the greatest challenges facing local decision makers. Housing shortages were a constant problem during late Stalinism, to which there was no quick or easy solution. One of the first, and certainly the most intractable problems, facing Leningrad's veterans was finding somewhere to live. This chapter explores the official mechanisms by which veterans were allocated housing, as well as the many and varied tactics they employed to obtain housing on their own initiative. It argues that providing veterans with temporary or permanent housing proved beyond the means of the Leningrad soviet and the Leningrad party. Although ex-servicemen and their families had legal entitlements to housing, the right to new housing or to reclaim former homes was far from automatic. The chapter also examines ex-servicemen's attitudes to housing shortages, the inequalities of housing distribution and the abysmal living conditions they often encountered. The failure of the state, and its local representatives, to provide “homes for heroes” inevitably created disappointment. As a result some veterans privately questioned official claims that the state was making unprecedented efforts to reward veterans. Veterans' views of these issues provide an important indication of how they evaluated post-war society and their place in it. Housing, to quote the historian Rebecca Manley, was “a contested terrain in which individuals and groups fought not only over scarce material resources, but over who won the war, and the extent to which the war would determine the post-war order.”<sup>1</sup> Housing, therefore, provides a prism through which the experience of post-war re-adaptation can be refracted, casting light upon the difficulties of demobilization, but also separating out the winners and losers in post-war society.

Housing is not just an important theme because it offers an opportunity to evaluate former soldiers' attitudes towards demobilization. Housing provision for demobilized veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast provides a litmus test to judge theories of entitlement. One of the principal ways historians have approached writing about demobilization has been to focus on the social welfare benefits extended to veterans.<sup>2</sup> Throughout modern history European and North American societies have

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Manley, “Where should we settle the comrades next?” The adjudication of housing claims and the construction of the post-war order’, in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.233-46 (p.234).

<sup>2</sup> Englander, ‘Soldiers and Social Reform’, pp.318-26.

created expectations that armed service deserves tangible material rewards, sometimes referred to as ‘the military covenant’ or ‘reciprocity’. The rhetoric that returning soldiers deserve special treatment is still very much with us today. Notions of entitlement have also formed an important part of how historians have written about Red Army veterans. Mark Edele, in particular, has argued that in the years before the establishment of an organized veterans’ movement, it was a shared sense of entitlement which bound veterans together as a group.<sup>3</sup> As Edele writes, “Soviet war veterans in the first post-war decade formed a socially relevant group because they tended to act alike, as they shared a sense of individual entitlement vis-à-vis the community they had fought for.”<sup>4</sup> Clearly, state benefits played an important role in easing ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen’s transition into civilian life, and entitlement veterans’ identities. However, being a veteran was not just a matter of legal status or entitlement, but also the effects exposure to extreme violence and mass death had upon soldiers’ lives. More importantly, as Edele acknowledges, entitlement, the claim to special treatment, and privilege, the institutionalisation and reciprocation of these claims, were very different things.<sup>5</sup> The distribution of housing in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast and the implementation of veterans’ housing rights offer the opportunity to examine to what extent veterans were able to transform legal entitlement into concrete privilege or special status. The complexities of the local post-war housing crisis suggest that few veterans, at least in Leningrad, extracted practical advantage from theoretical privilege. The complexities of the local post-war housing crisis prevented veterans from emerging a single privileged social group.

### **Destruction, Damage and Housing Conditions**

In February 1946 Vasilii Aleksandrov was invalided out of the Red Army. In mid March he was greeted at the railway station in Ordezh, approximately 130 kilometres south of Leningrad, by his mother, aunt and a cousin. The following day they set off on the twenty-five kilometre walk home. He was shocked by what awaited him:

“On the way we passed the village of Pochap which had been partially burnt down, but the next village Beloe had been completely burnt down, only two homes and two barns remained. Not one building remained in the villages of Tren’kovo and Khrenelki. Our village Moshkovye Poliany had also suffered, fourteen buildings had been burnt down, but around fifty remained. Of all the

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<sup>3</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.185-214, Edele, ‘Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group’, pp.111-37.

<sup>4</sup> Edele, ‘Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group’, p.112.

<sup>5</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.185.

surrounding villages, and there had been nine... before the war, only one remained, ours.”<sup>6</sup>

Veterans like Vasilii Aleksandrov returned to a landscape scarred by trenches, pitted by shells and littered with burnt-out villages. By 1947 parts of the oblast still resembled a moonscape.<sup>7</sup> Sixteen towns and 2032 villages were destroyed or severely damaged by fighting. In August 1945 the oblast soviet calculated that 56,720 residential buildings were totally destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Districts to the south of the city, where the fighting had been particularly intense, suffered disproportionately. Sixty-two villages and 6778 homes were burnt down in the Mginskii *raion* (district). One hundred sixty-nine villages and 12,811 homes were destroyed in the Tosnenskii *raion*. Only twenty residential buildings survived in the Kirishskii *raion*. Important towns such as Pavlovsk, Pushkin, Mga and Tosno were all but flattened. In Kolpino, twenty kilometres south of Leningrad, eighty-five per cent of housing was destroyed, causing an estimated 620 million roubles of damage.<sup>9</sup> The Leningrad oblast had also been dramatically depopulated. By August 1945 its population was just 492,952 people, less than a third of its pre-war level.<sup>10</sup> The homes and communities to which many veterans were returning had changed beyond all recognition.

Many veterans found the villages where they had once lived and worked had entirely disappeared. Others discovered that their homes were now occupied by other people. Veterans returning to the Volosovskii lime factory in 1946 found that they were homeless. In 1944 a camp for German POWs had been established in the factory's residential buildings. Because POWs were now essential to the factory's operation the NKVD refused to relocate the camp.<sup>11</sup> No wonder many veterans believed that their

<sup>6</sup> V.A. Aleksandrov, 'S polia boia – na sel'skyiu niva', in V.P. Cherepov (ed.), *Veterany sela vspominaiut...*, (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskim pravleniem rossiskogo ITO sel'skogo khoziaistva, 1990), pp.24-33 (p.24), idem., 'Vyborg – Berlin – Moskovye Poliany', in V.P. Cherepov (ed.), *Veterany sela vspominaiut o voine* (Saint-Petersburg: 1995), pp.6-17.

<sup>7</sup> Steinbeck, *A Russian Journal*, p.12.

<sup>8</sup> *Resheniia deviatoi sessii Leningradskogo oblastnogo soveta deputatov trudiashchikhsia ot 9-10 avgusta 1945 goda* (Leningrad: Upravleniia Izdatel'stva i Poligrafii Ispolkoma Lengorsoveta, 1945), pp.3-12 (p.3). See also TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7177/1.3.

<sup>9</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.313/l.126-27; *Resheniia deviatoi sessii Leningradskogo oblastnogo soveta*, p.3; 'O sel'skom i kolhoznom stroitel'stve v raionakh leningradskoi oblasti', *Propaganda i agitatsiia*, No.16, August 1945, pp.20-27 (p.20); 'Novoe Kolpino – Vozrozhdenie goroda', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 16 February 1946, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7186/1.2. Official reports estimated the population of the Leningrad oblast in January 1941 as 1,505,000, TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7177/1.2.

<sup>11</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7555/l.18-21.

sacrifices had been forgotten, when the residential needs of the former enemy were placed above their own. Finding somewhere to live in this war-torn landscape was difficult. Indeed, it may have led many veterans to decide to move to Leningrad where the prospect of work and housing seemed brighter.

Another solution to the destruction of housing was the construction of temporary shelters and dugouts known as *zemlianki*. In July 1945, according to a report written by Danilin, head of the local Department for State Aid for Soldiers' Families, there were approximately 2000 servicemen's families living in *zemlianki* in the Leningrad oblast.<sup>12</sup> Compared to the Pskov, Smolensk and Orlov oblasts this figure was low. This, however, was scant compensation for those directly affected.<sup>13</sup> Despite widespread concern, the number of families living in such conditions did not improve as quickly as officials hoped. Danilin's annual report forwarded to Moscow in December 1945 noted that 2000 service families were still living in dugouts.<sup>14</sup> It was unlikely that an oblast soviet decision passed in December 1945 succeeded in re-housing all of these families by March 1946 as planned.<sup>15</sup>

Significant numbers of industrial workers shared these living conditions. In December 1945 approximately 232 families and 593 single people were working on the construction of the Dubrovskii power station in Kirovsk. Three hundred and fifty-eight people were living in tents, forty-three families in plywood huts, and 173 families and 233 individuals in *zemlianki*.<sup>16</sup> Plans to employ veterans in key industries drawn up in mid-December 1945 recommended that 250 veterans were employed at the Svir-3 hydroelectric power station in the north-west of the oblast.<sup>17</sup> On arrival they found construction workers living in *zemlianki*, conditions they would share through the winter of 1945-46. Demidov, the site's construction chief, was ordered to re-house 412 families by 1 March 1946. Despite the construction of some new barracks, on 9 February 1946 there were still 1444 people, including 350 families, crammed into 260 *zemlianki*. The dugouts were crowded, deep, dilapidated and therefore extremely

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<sup>12</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.43-48 (l.45).

<sup>13</sup> Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo*, p.55.

<sup>14</sup> GARF/f.A-415/op.2/d.191/l.147.

<sup>15</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.45/d.1141/l.28-30.

<sup>16</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.13/d.1601/l.68.

<sup>17</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.63-64.

dangerous. It was almost impossible to keep the cold, damp and dirt at bay. Tuberculosis and rickets were widespread. Worse still many *zemlianki* were under imminent threat of collapse. One official feared that if people were not re-accommodated by the springtime thaw deaths were unavoidable.<sup>18</sup>

Housing conditions were only marginally better in Leningrad. Compared to other Soviet cities or fire-stormed German cities, Leningrad survived the war relatively intact. Whereas Stalingrad, Smolensk, Voronezh and Rostov-on-Don all lost in excess of seventy-five per cent of their housing, approximately twenty per cent of Leningrad's housing was destroyed.<sup>19</sup> Foreign observers remarked that much of the city, particularly its historic centre, was remarkably well preserved. Much had been done to preserve architecturally important buildings and monuments, and reconstruction work had begun even before the blockade was lifted.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, damage to Leningrad's housing was extensive. 107,000 high explosive bombs and 150,000 artillery shells had been dropped on the city. In November 1947 Lazutin, chairman of the city soviet, estimated that a million Leningraders had lost their homes during the war. Vakser puts the figure somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000.<sup>21</sup> The most authoritative figures suggest that 3174 buildings with a living space of 3,300,000 m<sup>2</sup> were totally destroyed and 7143 buildings were severely damaged with a loss of 2,200,000 m<sup>2</sup> of housing. A further 9000 wooden buildings, many of them residential, were dismantled to provide fuel.<sup>22</sup> The damage was

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<sup>18</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.13/d.1601/ll.7-7ob; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/1.45

<sup>19</sup> On levels of destruction in other Soviet cities see Mark B. Smith, 'Rubble to Communism. The Urban Housing Programme in the Soviet Union, 1944-1964' (Ph.D Dissertation, SSEES/UCL, University of London, 2007), p.48. For a comparative perspective see Jeffrey M. Dieffendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). On Leningrad see V.A. Kamenskii and A.I. Naumov, *Leningrad: gradostroitel'nye problemy razvitiia* (Leningrad: Stroizdat leningradskoe otdelenie, 1973), p.104 and V.I. Piliavskii, 'Arkhitektura i stroitel'stvo', in *Ocherki istorii Leningrada* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1970) *Tom.6 Leningrad v period zaversheniia stroitel'stva sotsializma i postepennogo perekhoda k kommunizmu, 1946-1965gg.*, pp.207-30 (p.207).

<sup>20</sup> Steven Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds: Commemorations, Myths, and the Restoration of Leningrad's Imperial Heritage, 1941-1950' (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> 'Vo Slavy Rodnogo Goroda', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 7 November 1947, p.5; Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.71,76.

<sup>22</sup> Piliavskii, 'Arkhitektura i stroitel'stvo', p.207, and Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.71. For marginally lower figures see O.N. Arstiutkina, 'Leningradskaia partiinaia organizatsiia v bor'be za vosstanovlenie zhilogo fonda (1944-1945gg.)', *Vestnik Leningradskogo Universiteta* No.20 (1964), pp.17-28 (p.17), Blair A. Ruble, 'The Leningrad Affair and the Provincialization of Leningrad', *Russian Review*, Vol.42, No.3 (July 1983), pp.301-20 (pp.304-05); 'Za dal'neishii rastsvet nashogo liubimogo goroda', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 18 January 1947, p.1, 'O sostoianii eksploatatsii zhilogo fonda goroda

not uniformly distributed across the city. While the city centre was relatively well preserved outlying districts in the north and west were devastated. The Kirovskii, Vyborgskii and Leningradskii raiony lost 65, 42 and 40 per cent of their housing respectively.<sup>23</sup> Many veterans and re-evacuees hardly recognised their neighbourhoods.

Like many late Stalinist cities the condition of Leningrad's housing was abysmal. Few buildings had escaped damage or dilapidation. In 1944 approximately eighty per cent of buildings required re-glazing, repairs to roofs and re-plastering of façades. Electricity, gas, and water supply networks had been seriously damaged. Water supply had ceased to function in at least 40,000 apartments, approximately ten per cent of the total stock.<sup>24</sup> In order to ease the housing shortage buildings unfit for habitation were pressed into temporary service. People continued to live in workshops and basements; just as they had done during the blockade. A number of trade organisations billeted their workers in warehouses, a practice the city soviet tried to outlaw.<sup>25</sup> On 1 July 1946 Nikulin, head of Leningrad's State Sanitation Inspectorate, compiled an investigation of living conditions in basement accommodation. 3,566 people (1358 men, 1698 women and 510 children) were living in basement dormitories. Average living space was 5.2 m<sup>2</sup>, although in places as low as 3 m<sup>2</sup>. In addition 7306 people, including 1733 children, were living in underground apartments with an average living space of 6.4 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Much of this accommodation was over two metres below ground, and received little or no natural light. Even in summer basements were cold, damp and unsanitary. Standing water was a constant problem. Nikitin's report recommended that an end was put to housing people, even temporarily, in basements. However, the Sanitary Inspectorate had raised these issues before; and it was unlikely that it was any more successful in eradicating the problem this time.<sup>26</sup>

By 1950, according to the official narrative of post-war recovery, Leningrad was once again a thriving metropolis, restored to its former glory. Propagandists emphasised the startling rapidity of reconstruction. Scholars and citizens alike boasted of successes, in defiance of predictions from the west that rebuilding would take twenty years. Initial

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Leningrada i podgotovke ego k zime', *Leninradskaiia pravda*, 2 September 1947, p.2, 'Vo Slavy Rodnogo Goroda', *Leningradskaiia pravda*, 7 November 1947, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Arstiutkina, 'Leningradskaiia partiinaia organizatsiia', p.17.

<sup>24</sup> Arstiutkina, 'Leningradskaiia partiinaia organizatsiia', p.17; S.N. Semanov, 'Gorodskoe khoziaistvo', in *Ocherki istorii Leningrad*, Vol.6, pp.251-71 (p.251).

<sup>25</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskoi gosplanovskoi komissii*, 15 June 1946, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.19/d.3/l.27-30.

results were impressive. 1,600,000 m<sup>2</sup> of living space, 3,000,000 m<sup>2</sup> of roofing and 940,000 m<sup>2</sup> of facade were repaired between 1944 and 1945. Leningraders contributed approximately 52,000,000 man-hours of voluntary labour.<sup>27</sup> Between 1945 and 1946 a further 1,500,000 m<sup>2</sup> were repaired in lightly damaged buildings.<sup>28</sup> During the first post-war five year plan (1946-1950) 2,400,000 m<sup>2</sup> of living space was constructed, considerably more than during the entire 1930s. Approximately 400,000 citizens obtained new housing.<sup>29</sup> By 1950 the city housing stock reached 22,800,000 m<sup>2</sup>, approximately eighty to ninety per cent of the pre-war stock.<sup>30</sup> Most historians have suggested that at some point between 1948 and 1950 damage to housing and basic urban infrastructure was finally repaired.<sup>31</sup>

The successful reconstruction of the city, however, was largely a myth. Rather than bringing discernable improvements post-war reconstruction recreated the overcrowded standards of the 1930s. Dark, damp, cold and dirty housing remained the norm. In 1950, even after new construction and extensive restoration, the average per-capita living space was 6.4 m<sup>2</sup>, well below the theoretical sanitary norm.<sup>32</sup> Self-contained apartments, the apex of the urban housing hierarchy, were largely reserved for privileged members of the élite.<sup>33</sup> The standard form of urban housing remained communal apartments (*kommunalki*), in which each room housed a single family. Yet, for those a rung lower on the housing ladder *kommunalki* were luxurious by comparison. Leningraders living in crowded barracks or filthy dormitories enjoyed even less privacy, security and comfort. Throughout the late Stalinist period living conditions in dormitories (*obshchezhitie*) were a constant source of concern. Despite numerous

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<sup>27</sup> I. Lazutin, 'Boevye Pomoshchniki sovetov Leningrada', in A. Bubnov (ed.), *Opyt raboty obshchestvennykh komissii sodeistviia vosstanovleni i ekspluatatsii domokhoziaistv goroda Leningrada* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1948), pp.11-23 (p.13). Arsiutkina, 'Leningradskaia partiinaia organizatsiia', pp.26-28.

<sup>28</sup> Semanov, 'Gorodskoe khoziaistvo', p.251.

<sup>29</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.76; Ezhov, 'Vosstanovlenie Leningrada', p.15.

<sup>30</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.76.

<sup>31</sup> Cattell argues for 1948, Semanov 1949 and Ruble July 1950. See David T. Cattell, *Leningrad: A Case Study of Soviet Urban Government* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger, 1968), p.7; Semanov, 'Gorodskoe khoziaistvo', p.251 and Ruble, 'The Leningrad Affair', pp.301-02.

<sup>32</sup> Zubkova (ed.), *Sovetskaia zhizn*, p.176.

<sup>33</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times; Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.47.



inspections, anxious reports and resolutions from local soviets abysmal living conditions persisted.<sup>34</sup>

After her demobilization Elena Babina settled in Leningrad. She found work at the Kirov factory, and was given a bed in a women's dormitory.

“There were seven beds in my room already and mine was the eighth. Later we all got married, one by one, and brought our husbands to live in the hostel, although the room measured only 24 square metres... We lived in the hostel for seven years... And then, after seven years, we were given – not flats, but rooms in communal flats. We were all very glad.”<sup>35</sup>

Such conditions were far from unusual at the Kirov works, one of Leningrad's largest employers, or the city as a whole. In January 1951 Aleksei Gonchukov, an ex-serviceman, was appointed as an assistant to the director of the Kirov factory. In unpublished memoirs written in 1967 he described his shock at workers' living conditions. Over 2000 families were living in dormitories which Gonchukov considered unfit for human habitation. Several *obshchezhitie* presented a 'nightmarish sight' (*koshmarnoe zrelishe*). Eighty-two families were crammed into a dormitory located in a converted hospital, which had no kitchen, lavatories or running water. Another dormitory was described as a 'concentration camp'; language not to be employed lightly. A converted secondary school on prospect Stachek, used as a dormitory since 1944, attracted the worst criticism. By 1951 over 1600 people were living there. Rooms housing as many as ten families were sub-divided into small spaces by sheets, towels and sheets of paper hung from strings. With Gonchukov's help these workers were re-settled by May 1952.<sup>36</sup> The continued existence of such terrible conditions years after the war's end cut against the myth that the normal housing conditions had been re-established by 1950.

### **The Official Response – Law and Entitlement**

Leningrad's veterans were not returning to a promised land. Where housing was available it was of a low standard, and in many cases much worse than the barracks and garrisons serving soldiers had known in occupied Germany. Yet, regardless of the conditions that awaited them, many veterans returned with hopes for a better and freer

<sup>34</sup> See for example TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.6/d.113/ll.1-4; TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.150/ll.61-64; TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.173/ll.7-8, ll.19-19ob.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Svetlana Alexiyevich, *War's Unwomanly Face* (Moscow: Progress, 1985), p.137.

<sup>36</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.334/ll.34-36.

post-war life. Much has been written about the spirit of freedom fostered by the war.<sup>37</sup> Post-war society was suffused with an optimistic atmosphere, and a faith that life would quickly improve.<sup>38</sup> Many veterans, in the words of Ilya Ehrenburg, believed that:

“...after victory everything would suddenly change... When I recall conversation at the front and at the rear, when I re-read letters, it is clear that everybody expected that once victory had been won people would know real happiness. We realized, of course, that the country had been devastated, impoverished, that we would have to work hard, and we did not have fantasies about mountains of gold. But we believed that victory would bring justice, that human dignity would triumph.”<sup>39</sup>

Amidst the heady atmosphere of post-war optimism it was possible to believe that wartime service had reconfigured the relationship between state and society.<sup>40</sup> Soldiers and citizens alike believed that wartime sacrifice would be rewarded by the state and that they would receive tangible benefits. At the top of veterans’ list of demands was a right to housing; ‘Homes for Heroes’ as it were.

Historians have frequently presented demobilized soldiers as post-war Stalinism’s most privileged group; enjoying rights, entitlements and a level of upward social mobility unimaginable to other citizens. In theory serving soldiers, the war disabled, demobilized veterans and their families did enjoy privileged access to housing, something unavailable and unimaginable to other citizens. A Sovnarkom resolution issued on 5 August 1941 guaranteed those serving in the Army, Navy and NKVD forces and their families, the right to reclaim pre-war living space on return from armed service. Service families who lost homes as a result of wartime destruction were entitled to equivalent accommodation.<sup>41</sup> Further legislation, passed in May 1942, made housing provision for disabled ex-servicemen a high priority.<sup>42</sup> The 23 June 1945 demobilization law, the legal bedrock of demobilization, re-iterated veterans’ housing rights. The law

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<sup>37</sup> Elena Seniavskaia, *Frontovoe pokolenie, 1941-1945: istoriko-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie* (Moscow: IRI-RAN, 1995). See chapter 5 for a fuller exploration of these ideas.

<sup>38</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, pp.11-19.

<sup>39</sup> Jerry F. Hough, ‘Debates About the Postwar World’, in Linz (ed.), *The Impact of World War II*, pp.253-81 (p.255).

<sup>40</sup> On this new relationship see Shaun Morcom, ‘Social Workings of Soviet Power: State-Society Relations in Postwar Russia 1945-1953’ (D.Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> I.A. Osipov (ed.), *Sbornik: ukazov, postanovlenii, reshenii, rasporyazhenii i prikazov voennogo vremeni, 1941-1942*, (Leningrad: Leningradskoe gazetnoe zhurnal’noe i knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1942), pp.180-81.

<sup>42</sup> *Trudovoe ustroistvo invalidov v SSSR. Sbornik normativnykh aktov i metodicheskikh materialov* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1963), p.39.

contained a commitment to provide veterans with accommodation and to extend to them a system of preferential credit for the reconstruction and repair of housing.<sup>43</sup>

Although veterans' welfare benefits would be eroded after 1947, many veterans continued to assume that spilt blood entitled them to privileged access to housing. Leningrad's veterans were still invoking their perceived moral rights as former soldiers in appeals for better housing under Khrushchev. Military service, however, was only one component in veterans' attempts to present themselves as deserving citizens. To maximise the effectiveness of their petitions veterans also asserted other identities and sources of entitlements, including proletarian social backgrounds, managerial or research skills and long-term residency in Leningrad.<sup>44</sup> Wartime military service did not replace social class as the determinate of Soviet identities, but rather superimposed another layer of meaning onto existing notions of what it meant to be Soviet.<sup>45</sup>

Veterans had plenty of opportunity to familiarise themselves with their entitlements either before or after their discharge from the military. Soviet propaganda reinforced this sense of entitlement.<sup>46</sup> Demobilization legislation was widely reprinted in the press.<sup>47</sup> *Leningradskaia pravda*, *Vechernii Leningrad* and local factory newspapers regularly reported on the welfare payments and support available for veterans.<sup>48</sup> Pocketbooks drawing together relevant legislation, political speeches, rules and regulations provided a handy reference guide for entitlements.<sup>49</sup> Soldiers awaiting

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<sup>43</sup> 'Zakon o demobilizatsii starshikh voznastov lichnogo sosatava deistvuishchei armii', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 24 June 1945, p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Christine Varga-Harris, 'Forging Citizenship on the Home Front. Reviving the Socialist Contract and Constructing Soviet Identity during the Thaw', in Polly Jones (ed.), *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp.101-16 (p.106).

<sup>45</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.68.

<sup>46</sup> See for example Nina Vatolina's poster *Ty khrabro voeval s vragom – voidi, khoziain, v novyi dom!* (1945) reproduced in P.A. Snopkov (et.al.), *Plakaty voiny i pobedy, 1941 – 1945* (Moscow: Kontakt-Kul'tura, 2005), p.217.

<sup>47</sup> See Prologue, p.30.

<sup>48</sup> For example, 'Dopolnitel'nye l'goty sem'iam uchastnikov otechestvennoi voiny', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 6 October 1945, p.1; 'Pomosh' semiam zashchitnikov rodiny', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 16 October 1945, p.1; 'Leningradtsy zabotiasia o sem'iakh zashchitnikov rodiny', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 26 February 1946, p.2; 'L'goty zashchitnikov rodiny', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 26 July 1946, p.2; 'V sanatoriiakh i zdavnitsakh. Zabota ob uchastnikov otechestvennoi voiny', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 21 August 1946, p.1.

<sup>49</sup> *Pamiatka demobilizovannym soldatami i serzhantam sovetskoi armii, sostavlena glavnoi voennoi prokuraturoi vooruzhennykh sil SSSR, 3-e dopolnennoe izdanie* (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, Ministerstva Vooryzhennykh Sil SSSR, 1947).

demobilization were the targets of intensive propaganda and agitation from officers and political commissars. In July 1945 Colonel Ivanov, deputy head of Political Administration on the Leningrad Front, reported on his work. Great efforts were made to ensure soldiers understood what they were entitled to and that they had the documents to support their claims. Captain Gladkii, the head of one party cell, for example, discussed demobilization legislation separately with every individual eligible for discharge.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the propagandists' best efforts many veterans failed to grasp what entitlement meant in practice. Leningrad's ex-servicemen, especially at the beginning of mass demobilization, were often confused about their rights. Armies awaiting demobilization are often a fertile breeding ground for myths and rumours. This was particularly the case in the Soviet example, when soldiers imagined benefits never officially sanctioned. Official communications, therefore, were in constant competition with unofficial sources of information.<sup>51</sup> Housing was a prominent source of anxiety. Veterans inundated party agitators, demobilization officials, housing bureaucrats and lawyers with questions about obtaining or reclaiming housing.<sup>52</sup> By 29 July 1945 Leningrad's demobilization reception points had received 1470 enquiries for further information; 1020 of which related to housing.<sup>53</sup> The questions officials at the Vyborg district registration point received were dominated by housing:

“How does one receive living space if one's home has been destroyed, and in what timescale will it be provided? By what means can occupied living space be freed? Who should provide living space if a demobilized veteran lived in an employer-controlled building before entering the army? Where can one obtain building materials?...”<sup>54</sup>

An important source of information and advice for Leningrad's veterans and their families were legal consultations provided free of charge at locations throughout the city by the Leningrad City College of Lawyers.<sup>55</sup> The demand for legal advice from veterans was unprecedented. Between 1 April 1945 and 1 April 1946 lawyers spent 2488 working

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<sup>50</sup> K. Ivanov, 'Politicheskaiia rabota s demobilizyemymi', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 13 July 1945, p.3.

<sup>51</sup> Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', pp.193-97.

<sup>52</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/l.35.

<sup>53</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.154-55

<sup>54</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7003/l.104.

<sup>55</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 15 May 1946, pp.10-11.

days in voluntary service at demobilization reception points, the central city officers' club, district social security offices, district offices of the Department for State Aid for Soldiers' Families, the executive committees of district soviets, and at large employers, like the Kirov, Bolshevik and Skorokhod factories. In total 65,082 people were assisted with free consultations. In addition in the second half of 1945 lawyers gave 94 lectures, mainly to veterans, followed by a further 381 lectures between January and March 1946.<sup>56</sup>

The demand for legal assistance was so large it could not be met by free voluntary provision. The legal complexities surrounding obtaining and reclaiming housing required professional resolution, and led to an explosion in demand for commercial legal assistance. Approximately eighty per cent of free legal consultations developed into cases where lawyers received payments.<sup>57</sup> During 1945 the City College of Lawyers gave paid advice to over 185,000 citizens, four and a half times more than in 1944.<sup>58</sup> Some lawyers exploited the legal confusion created by the housing crisis and charged excessive fees. A meeting of the College of Lawyers reported that in May 1945 the average monthly earning for a lawyer was 2892 roubles, by September it had reached 4851 roubles. By April 1946 there were reports of lawyers earning up to 10,000 roubles in just six months.<sup>59</sup>

Despite extensive propaganda many questions about what support veterans could expect whilst finding or reclaiming housing remained. The demobilization law, and its local reiterations, contained little detailed information about how the law would be implemented or what to do when individual circumstances departed from the norm. Advice on how to bring a law-suit to reclaim an occupied apartment, or obtain temporary housing was not freely available. Therefore, many veterans depended on local and official advisers to help resolve their housing problems.

### Official Planning

Local planning to accommodate veterans was largely a reaction to Moscow's vague commitment to provide housing for returning veterans. Forced into action by the

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<sup>56</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3672/op.1/d.4/l.9ob and d.6/l.27-29.

<sup>57</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 15 May 1946, pp.10-11; See also 'Lektsii, besedy, konsul'tatsii. V agitpunkte na kolomenskoi ulitsa', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 5 August 1946, p.1.

<sup>58</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3672/op.1/d.6/l.10.

<sup>59</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 15 May 1946, pp.10-11; LOGAV/f.R-3672/op.1/d.9/l.7ob-8.

*Zakon o demobilizatsii* the Executive Committee of the Leningrad oblast soviet (*Lenoblispolkom*) passed a resolution on 28 June 1945 interpreting the law and offering local solutions.<sup>60</sup> The Executive Committee of the Leningrad city soviet (*Lengorispolkom*) produced a similar resolution on 5 July 1945.<sup>61</sup> Local plans delegated the responsibility for re-housing veterans. District soviets, industrial employers and collective farms were encouraged to take all necessary measures to create normal living conditions for former soldiers and their families. Inspections were to ensure that pre-war living space, where it survived, met minimum standards. Reserves of empty accommodation and temporary dormitories were to be created in every district to assist veterans without housing. Dormitories containing between thirty and fifty beds were to be created in all towns and district centres in the oblast. In Leningrad a housing reserve of 1200 rooms was to be established. Each *raion* was to organise a dormitory with a capacity of between 300 and 350 beds by 15 July 1945. Supplies of building and decorating materials were to be distributed to veterans. Free timber was to be made available for construction and repairs of housing in rural areas.

The official discourse of law, planning and entitlement was detached from the reality of the housing crisis gripping both city and countryside. Given the rushed nature of Soviet demobilization planning, local authorities had little opportunity to develop and implement suitable plans for accommodating veterans. From the start of the process sections of the party-state in Leningrad were aware of the difficult task ahead. Within days of local plans being approved thousands of demobilized veterans began arriving in Leningrad. A party organisation-instructional department report dated 26 July 1945 openly stated that; “To more or less fully satisfy the claims of all the demobilized, in particular of families, to separate living space can’t even be pretended to be possible.”<sup>62</sup> Party officials acknowledged that the, “question of billeting many thousands of demobilized (soldiers) was the greatest difficulty for a city which had lost three million square metres of living space during the war.”<sup>63</sup>

The plan to create a housing reserve proved especially difficult to achieve. Investigations into the implementation of the *Gorispolkom* resolution from 5 July 1945

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<sup>60</sup> *Biulleten' Lenoblispolkoma*, No.13, 1945, pp.3-4.

<sup>61</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.13, 1945, pp.5-6 (p.5).

<sup>62</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/l.36.

<sup>63</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.434/l.3.

revealed a catalogue of problems. Only 800 rooms, two thirds of the proposed reserve, had been found and vacated within the proposed timescale.<sup>64</sup> Many city districts failed to fulfil their quota; the Petrogradskii district soviet contributed only forty of a planned hundred rooms. The condition of housing within the reserve was far from luxurious. Many of the rooms were far below the standard considered acceptable for returning heroes. Many rooms were tiny. Others were located in basements or in contested property where only local courts could determine future use.<sup>65</sup> Most importantly the modest reserves envisaged by local officials were simply unable to cope with the volume of veterans with a legal entitlement. Local planners consistently underestimated demand for housing from veterans.

### Housing Waiting Lists

As an officer V.M. Evseev had confidently informed soldiers that they would be provided with housing following demobilization. In his personal experience the opposite was the case. On contacting his local district housing administration he was told that there was no free housing and that he would be placed on a waiting list.<sup>66</sup> Tens of thousands of veterans would share this experience. As the pace of demobilization quickened housing waiting lists rapidly lengthened. The number of veterans' families registered on waiting lists was recorded in statistical reports produced by both the city soviet's Housing Department (between January and September 1946) and the Planning Statistics Department (between November 1945 and October 1946). Despite minor inconsistencies, both statistical series documented a steady increase in the number of demobilized soldiers and service families waiting for permanent accommodation.<sup>67</sup>

When demobilization was announced in June 1945 the families of 10,512 serving soldiers and war invalids were registered on housing waiting lists.<sup>68</sup> By 1 September 1945 waiting lists included 1959 veterans, 1762 war invalids and 14,187 service families.<sup>69</sup> A year later on 1 September 1946 a total of 93,211 people, including the

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<sup>64</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/l.36.

<sup>65</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.83.

<sup>66</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.471/l.133.

<sup>67</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/ll.19,16,28 and op.29/d.216/ll.8,6,12,28,26,33,34,36,35,32; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.114/ll.1-5ob.

<sup>68</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/ll.7ob-8.

<sup>69</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.190ob.

families of 9981 veterans, 2775 war invalids and 18,134 serving soldiers were on waiting lists.<sup>70</sup> Rather than easing with the passing of time Leningrad's housing crisis intensified. In February 1947 Gosteev, head of the city soviet Housing Administration, claimed that there were over 59,000 families on waiting lists, including 12,000 veterans' and 3000 war invalids' families.<sup>71</sup> To put this figure in perspective Moscow, a larger and more populous city, had 23,000 families on housing waiting lists. Gosteev attributed Leningrad's difficulties to the widespread destruction of wooden buildings during the blockade.<sup>72</sup> Waiting lists, however, were still to peak. Gosteev feared that the imminent arrival of the fourth demobilization wave would aggravate an already tense situation.<sup>73</sup>

By 1 October 1946 the families of 4173 veterans had received a total of 65,954 m<sup>2</sup>, at an average of 15.8 m<sup>2</sup> per family. Yet 10,073 families remained on the waiting lists.<sup>74</sup> Between November 1945 and October 1946 the number of housing recipients consistently hovered below forty per cent of those registered on lists.<sup>75</sup> The number of veterans successful in obtaining housing in any given reporting period was tiny; between 1 and 15 September 1946 only forty families received housing.<sup>76</sup> For every veteran allocated housing many more joined the list. Although 125 families obtained rooms between 1 and 15 January 1946, the waiting list lengthened by 425 families.<sup>77</sup> Investigations into the implementation of local demobilization planning complained that securing living space for veterans whose pre-war accommodation had been destroyed or illegally occupied was progressing extremely slowly.<sup>78</sup> It would take many veterans many years to obtain housing through official channels.

Khristofor Tur'ev was demobilized on 25 October 1945, having served continuously since 10 June 1941.<sup>79</sup> When the wooden building in which his wife and son

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<sup>70</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.144/l.5ob.

<sup>71</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.1.

<sup>72</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.7.

<sup>73</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.1.

<sup>74</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.32.

<sup>75</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/ ll.19,16,28; op.29/d.216/ll.8,6,10,12,28,26,33,34,36,35,32.

<sup>76</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.35.

<sup>77</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/ll.6-8.

<sup>78</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.83.

<sup>79</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/ll.2,6.



lived was dismantled in January 1943 they were resettled by the Vyborgskii district housing administration.<sup>80</sup> On 27 July 1946, after nine months of civilian life, he received notification from the Vyborgskii district procuracy that his family was to be 'administratively resettled'. The pre-war occupant of the room into which the Tur'evs had been moved in 1943 had been demobilized and was re-asserting his tenancy. The family, including a newly-born daughter, were about to be thrown onto the streets.<sup>81</sup> Due to extreme shortages the Vyborgskii district housing administration was unable to provide them with alternative accommodation, predicting that suitable housing would not be available until 1947 or 1948.<sup>82</sup>

The tidy bureaucratic world of entitlements, waiting lists and housing regulations was largely an imaginary one, which bore little resemblance to reality. Administrative and legal chaos was inevitable in the exceptional circumstances created by the blockade. Detailed instructions on how to register vacant living space and establish the tenancy rights of previous occupants issued in March 1942 were never properly implemented.<sup>83</sup> Speaking at a meeting in February 1947 Gosteev acknowledged that a process of housing reallocation, in which individuals and families relinquished their former and registered their new living space never formally took place.<sup>84</sup> In January 1946 the Primorskii and Vasileostrovskii district housing departments were castigated for failing to keep registers of vacant accommodation and accurate waiting lists, for not inspecting the living conditions of those registered on waiting lists and for a general attitude which created the potential for corruption.<sup>85</sup> The card indexes maintained by district housing administrations were out of date. An inspection of the waiting list in the Smol'ninskii district revealed that ten per cent of names were 'dead souls' (*mertvye dushi*). Many people had moved on or had resolved their problems themselves. Furthermore, there were thousands of people who could not be contacted by district housing departments, because there was no record of their workplaces or temporary addresses. Gosteev

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<sup>80</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/ll.2,6,10,11.

<sup>81</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/ll.6,11.

<sup>82</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/ll.6,11,27.

<sup>83</sup> Osipov (ed.), *Sbornik*, pp.187-89.

<sup>84</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.1.

<sup>85</sup> *Biulleten' Leningorispolkoma*, No.3, 1947, pp.13-14.

recommended a full re-registration of names on housing waiting lists.<sup>86</sup> This was formally proposed in July 1947, and duly conducted in September 1947.<sup>87</sup>

### Reclaiming Housing

The war had ruptured pre-war patterns of settlement in Leningrad and the surrounding countryside. As Leningraders moved within the city, in order to escape the results of destruction and dilapidation, and the threat of death, the tenancy of living space became confused. While some individuals and families sought refuge with relatives in other areas of the city others found space in undamaged buildings. Mass death and evacuation left plenty of empty apartments for people whose homes had been destroyed.<sup>88</sup> District housing administrations sanctioned some moves, but many families acted on their own initiative.<sup>89</sup> Inevitably many thousands of veterans, war invalids and re-evacuees returned to find that their homes were occupied by other people. Other former tenants found their homes had been turned into offices, workshops, warehouses and even woodsheds.<sup>90</sup> This reshuffling of housing patterns was not unique to Leningrad. In Kharkov, for example, the oblast prosecutor claimed that not a single person was living in the same apartment as before the war.<sup>91</sup> In 1945 the reception room of the USSR Supreme Soviet received 10,148 appeals related to housing, 45 per cent of which were from former owners whose living space were occupied.<sup>92</sup> However, in Leningrad the blockade had created a sense of entitlement and sacrifice amongst soldiers, evacuees and *blokadniki* which made the resolution of housing claims especially complicated and emotionally charged.

The legal right to preserve the living space of serving soldiers, a right which the city soviet reiterated on several occasions, was a bureaucratic veneer which obscured

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<sup>86</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/1.5.

<sup>87</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.15, 1947, pp.1-2; 'V Ispolkome Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 16 July 1947, p.4.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth White, 'After the War Was Over: The Civilian Return to Leningrad', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.59, No.7 (November 2007), pp.1145-61 (p.1154).

<sup>89</sup> Manley, "Where should we settle the comrades next?", p.234.

<sup>90</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.18, 1946, pp.12-13.

<sup>91</sup> Manley, "Where should we settle the comrades next?", p.234.

<sup>92</sup> Zubkova, *Poslevoennoe sovetskoe obshchestvo*, p.56.

the chaos of local housing administration.<sup>93</sup> Rules were routinely ignored. Housing was found wherever it was available, regardless of the rights of former tenants. Housing administrators made little concession to what might happen after the war. Orderly paperwork was a low priority. In theory demobilized veterans had the right to reclaim their pre-war accommodation. Administrative re-settlement powers gave courts and prosecutors the power to remove ‘illegal’ occupants from contested living space. Tenants were given a date by which to voluntarily vacate accommodation, after which they faced police eviction. In practice, however, disentangling the complex interwoven patterns of settlement and entitlement created a legal and administrative nightmare, which could take months to unravel.<sup>94</sup>

As the pace of demobilization and re-evacuation quickened the number of administrative resettlement cases mushroomed. District courts and prosecutors were swamped. In the second half of 1945 city courts examined 15,998 housing cases, an increase of over 300 per cent on the first half of the year.<sup>95</sup> A total of 22,967 cases of administrative settlement were brought in 1946, approximately 17,000 or seventy-five per cent involved serving soldiers.<sup>96</sup> Administrative resettlement was a disruptive process. For every family or individual successful reclaiming pre-war living space, another lost their “home”. Eviction forced another family onto waiting lists, into temporary accommodation, and even into pursuing their own disputes. The stakes for both parties in housing claims were high: preserving or reclaiming one’s home was a matter of great importance. Consequently, the already enormous caseload was swelled by a huge volume of correspondence as individuals attempted to further their cases by additional lobbying or by disputing rulings. Between July and October 1945 the city and district prosecutors received 21,183 letters of complaint and personally received 55,980 petitioners.<sup>97</sup>

Despite this enormous bureaucratic undertaking only a fraction of administrative re-settlement case files survive in the archives of the Leningrad city procuracy. These files, never previously examined by historians, provide a valuable insight into the

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<sup>93</sup> Osipov (ed.), *Sbornik*: pp.189-90, 228-30.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Zatianuvsheesia delo’, *Smena*, 25 October 1945, p.3; ‘Tri mesiatsa volokity’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 15 August 1945, p.3.

<sup>95</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.110/l.23.

<sup>96</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.7.

<sup>97</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7482/l.39-40.

arbitration of housing disputes, and further challenge the image of veterans as the beneficiaries of privileged access to housing. The surviving files are the product of re-examinations of individual cases prompted by letters of complaint (*zhaloby*) and petitions (*zaiavlenie*) produced by interested parties. As such they represent an unrepresentative sub-set of housing disputes. However, these documents vividly demonstrate the complexity of individual circumstances and the personal tragedies which lay behind legal battles. Many of the files contain *zhaloby* and *zaiavlenie* from both sides of the dispute preserved alongside the efforts of procuracy officials to disentangle enmeshed entitlements and substantiate rival claims. As such they provide an exceptionally rich source of information about arbitration and the tactics claimants employed to strengthen their claims.<sup>98</sup>

On the basis of this evidence housing entitlements were not as straightforward as law codes suggested. Even the most skilled administrators found the labyrinthine complexity of housing claims confusing. Legislation did not envisage many of the complicated situations arising in Leningrad. Many aspects of housing entitlements remained unclear and unresolved months after the war's end. Ambiguities about the rights of war-invalids, servicemen and veterans who had previously lived in employer controlled accommodation, or veterans with no residential status after ending professional military careers lasting fifteen years or more were still being discussed in February 1947, despite such issues being amongst the questions asked by returning veterans in July 1945.<sup>99</sup> Administrative procedure, especially where housing was involved, rarely operated according to the exact letter of the law. Incorrect decisions breaking the law or observing it too rigidly were a constant problem for district courts and prosecutors.<sup>100</sup> The circumstances in which individuals could be resettled had to be regularly reiterated in procuracy reports.<sup>101</sup>

The volume of paperwork generated by the process was remarkable. The file relating to the dispute between Evgenii Riushkin, a veteran medically discharged in July

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<sup>98</sup> On the culture of public letter writing see Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s', *Slavic Review*, Vol.55, No.1 (Spring 1996), pp.78-105, Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.68, No.4 (December 1996), pp.831-66 and Matthew E. Lenoe, 'Letter Writing and the State. Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History', *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.40, Nos.1-2 (January-June 1999), pp.139-70.

<sup>99</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.; TsGAIPD-SPb/24/2v/d.7003/l.104.

<sup>100</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.110/l.5, ll.8-12.

<sup>101</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.110/ll.8-25.

1944, and Ekaterina Zolina, a nurse demobilized in July 1945, contained 279 sheets of paper, many of them handwritten letters scribbled on notepaper, squared paper torn from exercise books, the back of wallpaper and musical scores. These complaints were addressed to, amongst others, the city procuracy, the Supreme Court of the USSR, the USSR Procuracy, the general staff of the Red Army, Sovnarkom and Stalin. Copies of these letters were then forwarded back to the Leningrad procuracy for further investigation.<sup>102</sup> Attempting to reclaim or retain residency required a considerable investment in time and energy and infinite patience. Returning to Leningrad after demobilization in July 1946 L.I. Mikhailov found his pre-war living space occupied and began the lengthy process of reclaiming it. He refused to accept several decisions ruling against him.<sup>103</sup> On 12 October he addressed a detailed and lengthy letter to the chairman of the Leningrad soviet, explaining his situation and complaining about the ‘callous’ attitude of the procuracy.<sup>104</sup> In time this letter was forwarded to the city procuracy and led to a re-examination of the case.<sup>105</sup> In mid November 1946 the city prosecutor ruled in Mikhailov’s favour. However, the current occupants Mariia Sadovskaia, her daughter and husband, a disabled veteran, also had certain rights.<sup>106</sup> Their home in the Vyborg district had been dismantled, and they had already been relocated twice.<sup>107</sup> Delays ensued while the Dzerzhinskii district soviet found the Sadovskiis suitable accommodation.<sup>108</sup> The situation was finally resolved in March 1947.<sup>109</sup>

Veterans, serving soldiers and members of their families rarely failed to emphasise frontline military service in their appeals. Peter Mikhailov’s letters recounted how, prior to his demobilization on 10 December 1945, he had spent five years commanding a tank unit, that he had been awarded four medals, had been wounded twice and heavily shell-shocked twice (*kontuzhen tiazhelym sotriaseniem mozga*).<sup>110</sup> His

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<sup>102</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1150/ ll.1-1ob, 1.3, 1.5, 1.9, 1.22, 1.45, ll.105-7, ll.108-9, ll.116-7, ll.120-2.

<sup>103</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/ 1.24,2,1,3.

<sup>104</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/ll.5-5ob.

<sup>105</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/1.4.

<sup>106</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/1.8,10.

<sup>107</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/1.12,15.

<sup>108</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/1.16.

<sup>109</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1305/1.17.

<sup>110</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1306/1.1,16.

approach was typical of the ways in which veterans framed their entitlements. They listed length of service, date of demobilization, medals awarded, and physical injuries as proof of the validity of their claims. Other appeals were more forceful in stressing their sense of wartime sacrifice. Both sides in a fractious dispute over the tenancy of a prestigious apartment on Admiralty embankment, in the centre of the city, highlighted their service records. Liashenko emphasised that he had been mobilized on the first day of the war, had won two medals and spent three years on the frontlines spilling his blood for the Soviet cause.<sup>111</sup> His opponent, Goncharov, was angered that a serving soldier could be “thrown onto the street.”<sup>112</sup> At their most basic such appeals drew attention to the fact that the correspondent was a veteran or serving soldier with legal rights.

Veterans, however, did not enjoy a monopoly upon claims to special treatment. Blockade survivors and re-evacuees also had a theoretical right to re-claim housing. Yet, historians have repeatedly suggested that ex-servicemen, serving soldiers and their families had stronger and more durable rights than evacuees. Indeed, Leningrad’s evacuees found their rights progressively eroded by central and local political bodies both during and after the war.<sup>113</sup> Manley argues, “the rights of evacuees to the return of their living space were frequently abrogated in the name of the rights of servicemen.”<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, “the rights of service people were substantially extended by officials on the ground, encroaching upon the less well-defined, but nonetheless recognised rights of others.”<sup>115</sup> This, however, did not mean that the rights of ex-servicemen automatically held sway. In 1942 all the inhabitants of a wing of a building on Baburin lane in the Vyborgskii district were moved out. During 1943 and 1944 the wing was refurbished, and used as housing for disabled ex-servicemen. From mid 1945 the district prosecutor began to evict these war-invalids in order to return pre-war tenants to their homes.<sup>116</sup> Military service was just one of many factors which determined the outcome of housing

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<sup>111</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1144/l.32.

<sup>112</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1144/l.1.

<sup>113</sup> Manley, ““Where should we settle the comrades next?””, pp.235-36, TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7481/l.38-39 for an individual example of the circumstances in which a re-evacuee could be deprived of their accommodation see TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.19/d.3/l.6.

<sup>114</sup> Manley, ““Where should we settle the comrades next?””, p.238.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.239.

<sup>116</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.110/l.49.

disputes. Social background, party-membership, pre-war residency, ethnicity, family circumstances, persistence and even luck could all influence the eventual result.

Leningraders rarely divided into neat categories of soldiers and civilians. The chaos and confusion created by death, destruction and population movements transcended administrative categories, and affected veterans and ordinary civilians in almost equal measure. Many demobilized veterans settling in Leningrad were outsiders with no previous connection to the city and its people. But in many cases the fate of demobilized Leningraders and ordinary civilians were inter-linked. Re-evacuated citizens and the families of serving soldiers, fallen heroes, disabled or demobilized veterans were often the same people. As such they had rights beyond their status as re-evacuees. The claim that veterans derived privilege at the expense of re-evacuees fails to appreciate the sheer complexity of social arrangements in post-war Leningrad. Indeed, the responsibility for pursuing housing claims frequently fell upon wives and mothers returning to Leningrad before the demobilization of husbands and sons. Close relationships to former and serving soldiers were frequently invoked in attempts to reclaim or retain disputed living space.<sup>117</sup> On occasion women undertook the burden of fighting legal battles ahead of their apathetic or incapacitated husbands. Evgeniia Smirnovaia lobbied to keep two rooms, one of eighteen m<sup>2</sup> and one of nine m<sup>2</sup>, that she shared with her husband, a demobilized veteran, and her daughter. Her husband passed away before the dispute could be resolved. This led the procuracy to conclude that a single eighteen m<sup>2</sup> room was now adequate for her smaller family.<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, demobilized veterans were not only in competition with re-evacuees and new migrants, but also their fellow ex-servicemen. Housing disputes between veterans were by no means uncommon. In the face of the post-war scramble for housing the 'frontline brotherhood' was fragile. Whilst stressing their own entitlements veterans simultaneously refuted their rivals' claims. Khristofor Tur'ev, for example, argued that as his opponent had joined the Red Army in 1942 whilst in evacuation, he was only entitled to accommodation in his place of conscription, and had lost the right to housing in Leningrad.<sup>119</sup> Tur'ev also argued that it was unjust that his family faced eviction, while a single person enjoyed an excessive twenty-one m<sup>2</sup> of

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<sup>117</sup> For example see the dispute between two women with connections to the military LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1300/II.1-1ob, 7-7ob.

<sup>118</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1311/I.1,11,12.

<sup>119</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/I.6,11,27.

living space.<sup>120</sup> On 2 November 1946 the district prosecutor concluded that the decision to evict Tur'ev was correct.<sup>121</sup> Housing disputes did little for social cohesion amongst veterans, or between veterans and the wider community. The idea that war and blockade had united Leningraders was largely a fantasy created by a mixture of propaganda and wishful thinking. Shortages of housing placed Leningraders, and newly arrived migrants, in direct competition. Just as in the 1920s and 1930s housing remained a deficit commodity that people would go to extraordinary lengths to obtain or protect.<sup>122</sup> In this respect arbitration had much in common with the apartment disputes of the 1930s.<sup>123</sup>

### Temporary Hostels

In theory demobilized soldiers arriving in Leningrad without accommodation, for whatever reason, were entitled to receive a bed in temporary hostels. Hostels were envisaged as a critical component of the plan to provide veterans with temporary shelter whilst more permanent accommodation was found. 200 beds for ex-servicemen and 20 for former officers, for example, were organised at the Moscow station for veterans passing through Leningrad on their journey home.<sup>124</sup> This aspect of veterans' housing provision, like so many others, did not operate as envisaged. Creating between 300 and 350 beds in every city district proved beyond the means of most district housing administrations. In August 1945 a *Gorispolkom* investigation into the implementation of demobilization planning revealed that hostels in the Petrogradskii and Krasnogvardeiskii districts were equipped for just 220 and 110 people respectively. The report euphemistically declared that the failure to realise this aspect of the plan might lead to "serious organisational problems,"<sup>125</sup> presumably a mixture of homelessness and disaffection.

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<sup>120</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/l.28.

<sup>121</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1312/l.44.

<sup>122</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp.47-48.

<sup>123</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Signals from Below'.

<sup>124</sup> 'Na Moskovskom vokzale', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 14 July 1945, p.3; 'Leningrad gotovit'sia k vstreche demobilizuemykh', *Smena*, 5 July 1945, p.1; 'Frunzentsy gotoviatsia k vstreche demobilizovannykh', *Smena*, 4 July 1945, p.1; 'Dlia demobilizovannykh voinov', *Smena*, 2 August 1945, p.2.

<sup>125</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.80-81.



By November 1945, according to statistics compiled by the City Housing Administration and the Statistical Planning Department, just six of fifteen city districts had organised hostels with more than three hundred spaces. The Volodarskii and Primorskii districts had only mustered one hundred beds between them.<sup>126</sup> Little had improved by the eve of the arrival of the third demobilization wave in April 1946. Gosteev was deeply troubled by the 'negligible' number of beds available in temporary hostels. A *Gorispolkom* resolution in order to increase the number of beds available, passed on 14 February 1946, was ignored. Indeed the Frunzenskii, Vyborgskii and Vasileostrovskii districts were closing hostels rather than opening new ones.<sup>127</sup> The 3573 spaces, 2475 for men and 1098 for women, organised by November 1945 marked the highpoint in provision.<sup>128</sup> In subsequent months, just as waiting lists lengthened, the number of hostel beds decreased. By May 1946 dormitories could accommodate just 1272 veterans, approximately a third of the number seven months previously.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the steady reduction in the total number of beds, the number of veterans registered in temporary hostels consistently exceeded capacity. On 1 December 1945 there were 5294 veterans registered in hostels intended to accommodate 2032 people. The situation was even more striking in individual examples. In the Volodarskii district in January 1946 there were 161 men and 201 women registered in hostels equipped to house 35 men and 65 women.<sup>130</sup> By mid May 1946 there were still 2337 people registered in 1272 spaces.<sup>131</sup> This, however, was not evidence of extreme overcrowding. Although there were occasionally reports of overcrowded hostels, the number of veterans registered in hostels frequently bore no relation to the actual number of residents.<sup>132</sup> On 1 November 1945 there were 4018 veterans registered in 3553 spaces. In reality there were only 1294 occupants, leaving 2259 beds empty.<sup>133</sup> According to

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<sup>126</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.19.

<sup>127</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.19-19ob.

<sup>128</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.19,16.

<sup>129</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.28.

<sup>130</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.6,8.

<sup>131</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.28.

<sup>132</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.207; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.19.

<sup>133</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.19.

Trakachev, head of the city party military committee, on 1 December 1945 there were 5294 veterans registered in temporary hostels but only 1054 actually living there.<sup>134</sup>

There were two explanations for this situation. First, there were advantages to registering in hostels but living elsewhere. A number of veterans, according to one report, registered in hostels but lived with relatives and friends, believing that they would receive living space more quickly if officials thought they lived in temporary hostels.<sup>135</sup> More importantly, registering in a veterans' hostel created the possibility of obtaining a residence permit (*propiska*), a document vital in obtaining employment and state assistance. As it had been in the 1930s obtaining a *propiska* was a source of constant anxiety for Leningraders. Without the requisite stamp in passports Soviet citizens were liable to deportation and criminal convictions. 32,865 people in 1946, and a further 37,681 in 1947 were forced to leave Leningrad because they lacked residency permits.<sup>136</sup> Veterans, in particular, had great difficulty obtaining residence permits. These problems regularly featured in letters incepted by the military censor.<sup>137</sup> In Moscow, for example, veterans were often refused *propiski* in their spouses' living space, because they lacked the paperwork to prove marriage or pre-war residency. One veteran described the vicious circle of not being able to obtain a *propiska*: because he did not have a marriage certificate, which he could not obtain because the police would not issue a passport because he did not have a *propiska*.<sup>138</sup> A thriving black market in fake permits in wartime and post-war Leningrad developed to service the large demand for permits. Corruption rackets in Red Army units on the Leningrad Front were producing false pre-war permits in significant numbers.<sup>139</sup> In comparison, registering in temporary hostels offered a cheaper and safer method of obtaining *propiski* without resorting to the black market.

Secondly, conditions in veterans' hostels were horrific. Only veterans with no alternative remained in hostels for more than a few days. In December Konopel'no, a member of the city soviet, inspected conditions in temporary hostels in the Dzershinskii

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<sup>134</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.219.

<sup>135</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.150.

<sup>136</sup> I.V. Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade (1945-1955): opyt istoricheskogo analiza* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2004), p.105.

<sup>137</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.46ob, 47ob, 82ob, d.187/l.193.

<sup>138</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-7525/op.55/d.10/l.158, 151-53.

<sup>139</sup> White, 'After the War', p.1156.

raion. In a hostel on ulitsa Nekrasova inner window frames were unglazed, the walls were damp and covered in mould. One room contained ten beds but nobody was living there. According to Konopel'no; "Naturally, nobody is living in the hostel, and nobody would live in it."<sup>140</sup> At a hostel on ulitsa Chernyshevskaiia several veterans were sleeping on the floor and unglazed window frames were stuffed with pillows.<sup>141</sup> Elsewhere hostels had dirty bedding, no hot water nor electric light and windows were boarded with plywood.<sup>142</sup> Security was often non-existent. Hostels had no locks on their doors, and no places where valuables could be kept.<sup>143</sup>

The profusion of inspections by a number of state representatives suggested official concern about the effects substandard temporary accommodation might have upon veterans. On 14 February 1946 the city soviet passed a resolution aimed at improving conditions in temporary hostels. Yet by mid April conditions were still described as 'extremely unsatisfactory'. Hostels remained cold, damp and dirty. As a result a number of veterans were suffering from skin diseases such as impetigo and eczema.<sup>144</sup> As late as October 1947 a *Gorispolkom* resolution described the terrible conditions in two hostels for demobilized veterans in the Volodarskii district. The dormitory was home to eight-three adults and twenty-two children, with three or four families crowded into fifteen or sixteen m<sup>2</sup>. The building needed major repairs. The roof was leaking, plaster was crumbling from walls, doors were broken, windows unglazed and running water only worked intermittently.<sup>145</sup> Even for veterans who had previously lived in barracks and dormitories such conditions were a disappointment. As a number of veterans complained; "It isn't as if we have been at the front for four years and haven't earned (separate) rooms."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.219; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.13.

<sup>141</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.13-13ob.

<sup>142</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.81; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.218-9, TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.55ob.

<sup>143</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.207.

<sup>144</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.19-19ob.

<sup>145</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.20, 1947 pp.16-17.

<sup>146</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7023/l.81.

### State Assistance versus Personal Initiative

Official propaganda combined with legal entitlements created the impression that veterans were given great assistance in obtaining housing. In reality most ex-servicemen resolved their difficulties themselves. By 1 May 1946 approximately 171,967 veterans had been demobilized in Leningrad.<sup>147</sup> Yet by 15 May 1946 only 3223 veterans' families had been allocated housing by district housing administrations, 726 veterans were resident in hostels, and a further 8584 veterans' families were registered in housing lists.<sup>148</sup> Even accounting for the turnover in temporary hostels the number of people directly assisted by Leningrad's housing administrations represented a tiny fraction of the total number of ex-service personnel.<sup>149</sup> The overwhelming majority found living space through their own initiative rather than state help.

Since employers controlled a much greater proportion of housing than the city and oblast soviets, they were a particularly important source of housing. However, Leningrad's employers often had difficulty providing sufficient housing for their rapidly expanding workforces. In 1946, for example, Elektrosila had to call a temporary halt to recruitment due to housing shortages.<sup>150</sup> In February 1946 the Wagon Repair Workshops of the Tram and Trolleybus Administration revealed that construction of housing for the factory's employees had ceased due to a shortages of materials and inadequate construction plans. Over 300 veterans employed in the workshops were waiting to receive housing, a backlog which hindered further recruitment.<sup>151</sup> Those veterans who found housing in employer-controlled building found that conditions were just as inadequate as in other buildings. Veterans living in employer controlled communal apartments or dormitories did not derive privilege from their legal entitlements. Veterans were living literally side by side with the rest of the population. Their living conditions were indistinguishable from other members of society.

Personal networks played a vital role in assisting veterans in finding housing. Official records tend to neglect or underestimate their importance, but unofficial networks were vital in veterans' transition to civilian life. The generosity of friends and

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<sup>147</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.77.

<sup>148</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.29/d.216/l.28; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op12/d.434/l.58-64.

<sup>149</sup> Edele, "A Generation of Victors", p.191.

<sup>150</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, p.97.

<sup>151</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.19/d.1/l.19.

families filled the gap left by inadequate state provision. Evseev was demobilized in January 1946. His home and property in Leningrad had been destroyed. He returned to the ruined village where his wife and daughter were now living.<sup>152</sup> After some months the opportunity to return to Leningrad arose. His brother-in-law offered to make a small room in his apartment available to the family while they sought alternative accommodation. This proved a vital staging post, eventually allowing the family to exchange their relative's small room for a larger one elsewhere.<sup>153</sup> Other veterans spent months moving between the homes of friends and relatives. The city soviet was aware of these informal mechanisms for obtaining housing, but largely powerless to prevent them. Indeed, it relied upon them to shelter the influx of veterans. In February 1947 Gosteev even suggested permitting individuals to settle and register their relatives in their homes provided there was adequate space, thereby formalising a practice already occurring without official sanction.<sup>154</sup>

### **Reconstruction and Repair**

Ultimately the long-term solution to Leningrad's post-war housing crisis lay in reconstruction. The plan for Leningrad's renovation was extremely ambitious. Restoration plans had been developed by the city's architects and planners even before the Blockade was lifted in January 1944. Conscious decisions were taken to preserve the architectural integrity of Leningrad historical centre.<sup>155</sup> But beyond that, widespread destruction created opportunities for redrawing urban plans. The reconstruction of the city was the subject of a massive propaganda campaign. Official slogans called for the city to be rebuilt so that it was better and more beautiful than in the past. The press was full of articles and photographs reporting on the reconstruction of the city, showing people labouring on building sites, restoring key buildings and reporting reconstruction plans. Rapid reconstruction became a badge of honour for Leningraders. The official narrative of a city rapidly and successfully rebuilt thanks to the efforts of both government and the people became a feature of collective memory. For a community impoverished and traumatized by war there was much that was impressive about reconstruction. For people accustomed to rubble and bombsites frantic rebuilding work created a deep impression.

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<sup>152</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.491/l.27, 30ob.

<sup>153</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.491/l.32, 35.

<sup>154</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.241/l.3.

<sup>155</sup> Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds'.

Leningraders had every right to be proud of their efforts to rebuild their beloved city. However, the propaganda campaign and official myth of reconstruction had more to do with the restoration of Leningrad's public image, than a substantive improvement in housing conditions. The city's chief architect, Baranov, was more concerned with projects to restore historical monuments and grand public spaces than domestic construction.<sup>156</sup> Although the restoration of war damaged buildings in the centre of the city did provide additional housing, this was not its exclusive purpose.<sup>157</sup> Some scholars view the reconstruction of the city's historical centre as part of the state's amnesiac agenda. By removing ruins and repairing any traces of wartime damage local politicians were consciously reshaping the memory of the war. Ruined buildings which might have become focal points of memory were removed, to be supplanted by official monuments.<sup>158</sup> In contrast Maddox suggests that the recreation of the historical centre was envisaged as a fitting tribute to Leningraders' suffering. Reconstruction provided a means of memorializing the blockade and the resilience of Leningraders.<sup>159</sup> Either way, the attempt to materially recreate the past carried important messages about the restoration or normality, the healing of wartime wounds and a sense of local patriotism based on Leningrad's status as an unconquered 'hero' city. Re-plastering frontages, clearing away rubble and providing waste bins created an orderly public image. Aesthetic initiatives to plant trees and shrubs and even grow sunflowers on balconies improved the public mood, and even carried messages about rebirth and renewal, but they did little to replace destroyed housing.<sup>160</sup> Reconstruction plastered over the cracks, sometimes literally. The re-imposition of order in post-war Leningrad was a façade. Scratch below the surface and reconstruction's achievements were less impressive.

Of course many demobilized veterans did benefit from new construction. From 1944 efforts were made to repair and rebuild the homes of service families, disabled ex-servicemen and demobilized veterans. In Leningrad in 1944 the living space of 28,083 service families was repaired. In the spirit of socialist competition city districts were

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<sup>156</sup> N.N. Baranov, V.T. Isachenko, *Glavnyi arkhitektors Leningrada: Nikolai Baranov tvorcheskii put' i sud'ba* (Saint-Petersburg: Stroiizdat, 2001).

<sup>157</sup> Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds', p.102.

<sup>158</sup> Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.113-50.

<sup>159</sup> Maddox, "Healing the Wounds".

<sup>160</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 28 September 1948, No.20, 1948, pp.1-6; *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.8, 1949, pp.1-6.

encouraged to compete to repair the most rooms.<sup>161</sup> By repairing the servicemen's families' homes the oblast and city soviets were reducing future demand for housing amongst the families of men yet to be demobilized. In response to the difficulties of creating housing reserves and lengthening waiting lists Sovnarkom issued a resolution on 21 September 1945 which required that ten per cent of all newly repaired and constructed living space was reserved for demobilized veterans, war-invalids, the families of serving and fallen soldiers.<sup>162</sup> Instances when veterans and war-invalids were given rooms and apartments in newly constructed or refurbished accommodation were regularly reported in the local press.<sup>163</sup> However, once the propaganda rhetoric was stripped away the benefits veterans derived from reconstruction were less persuasive. In February 1947 as a result of the slowness of reconstruction Gosteev recommended that the percentage of repaired or newly constructed housing made available to service families was doubled to twenty per cent.<sup>164</sup>

Although reconstruction was publicly hailed as a success, evidence of official frustration and popular dissatisfaction abounded. Housing construction lagged behind plan almost everywhere.<sup>165</sup> Articles about reconstruction and photographs of building sites in the local press not only celebrated achievements, but exhorted Leningraders to Stakhanovite efforts of reconstruction.<sup>166</sup> Between 1945 and 1950 the oblast and city soviets repeatedly demanded improvements in construction rates. Nearly every rural district was criticised at some stage for failing to meet reconstruction targets. In Tikhvin in 1946 the plan for reconstruction was fulfilled by just thirty-one per cent.<sup>167</sup> Leningrad city soviet decisions complained that reconstruction in the first half of 1945 was

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<sup>161</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/1.4.

<sup>162</sup> *Trudovoe ustroistvo invalidov v SSSR*, p.314.

<sup>163</sup> 'Dom dlia demobilizovannykh', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 28 August 1945, p.3; 'Iz zemlianok v doma', *Smena*, 22 October 1945, p.1; 'Dlia voinov Krasnoi Armii. Remont kvartir vo fruzenskom raione', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 2 March 1946, p.2; 'Kvartiry demobilizovannym', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 8 March 1946, p.4.

<sup>164</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.1/d.231/1.3.

<sup>165</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, p.97.

<sup>166</sup> For typical examples see, 'Boevye zadachi Leningradskikh stroitelei', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 17 June 1947, p.1; 'Reshitel'no usilit' tempy zhilishchnogo stroitel'stva', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 3 December 1947, p.1.

<sup>167</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.8, 1947, pp.8-9.

seriously behind plan, and lower than the equivalent period in 1944.<sup>168</sup> Industrial enterprises, amongst the city's largest employers, were routinely criticised for failing to build sufficient housing. Money, materials and labour were routinely diverted away from housing construction in order to meet the all-important production plans.<sup>169</sup>

Shortages of even the most basic building materials provided a major brake upon construction. Demands to increase the production of building materials appeared in the press in the spring and summer of 1947, reminding readers that construction depended upon the production of timber, cement, stone and bricks. Surprisingly, for a city with the vast forestry resources of the Karelian isthmus at its disposal timber remained in shortage.<sup>170</sup> A shortage of bricks was aggravated by the loss of one of the city's main brick factories. The factory's kilns had been used as crematoria for blockade victims and then levelled. The site was to become the Moskovskii victory park.<sup>171</sup> Glass was exceptionally difficult to obtain.<sup>172</sup> In the early stages of demobilization the city soviet simply did not have glass to distribute to veterans needing to repair windows.<sup>173</sup> Shortage meant that the windows of many residential buildings were still boarded over with sheet metal and plywood in July 1949.<sup>174</sup> Material shortages continually held up construction. It was estimated that the plan to repair 260,000 square metres of roofing in the Smol'ninskii district required 1,000 tons of sheet metal. In the previous six months the district had managed to procure just 59 tons.<sup>175</sup>

Shortages even influenced the types of buildings being constructed. New two storey buildings designed to make maximum use of available building materials, frequently built by German or POWs, appeared in many of the districts cleared of wooden buildings. Many of these structures were built in the Vyborgskii raion in the

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<sup>168</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.13, 15 July 1945, pp.8-9.

<sup>169</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, pp.97-98.

<sup>170</sup> 'Bol'she stroitel'nykh materialov', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 25 April 1947, p.1; 'Bol'she stroitel'nykh materialov', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 13 June 1947, p.1; 'Chto nam meshaet stroit', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 23 August 1947, p.3.

<sup>171</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.10/d.1376/l.13-14; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.134-38.

<sup>172</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.50-51.

<sup>173</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1519/l.81.

<sup>174</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.14, 31 July 1949, p.5.

<sup>175</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.19/d.8/l.8.



vicinity of Marx and Engels prospects and in Udel'naia and Novaia Derevnaia.<sup>176</sup> I.Z. Maseev, demobilized in September 1945, returned to *Lenproekt* to work on prototype plans for pre-fabrication of housing aimed at rationalising the use of materials and accelerating reconstruction.<sup>177</sup> Such ideas were ahead of their time, but would find widespread application during Khrushchev's mass housing campaign.

Compared to other sections of the population veterans enjoyed privileged access to building materials. A number of different organisations distributed building materials to veterans whose accommodation needed repair or redecoration. 18,098 sheets of plywood, 27 tons of chalk, 22.5 tons of alabaster, 24.8 tons of limestone 2354 m<sup>2</sup> of glass, 5.6 tons of nails, 10,000 metres of electric cable and 52,393 sheets of wallpaper were issued to demobilized veterans, war-invalids and service families by September 1945. In the first half of 1946 the Dzerzhinskii district soviet distributed 161 cubic metres of timber, 8 tonnes of chalk and limestone, 1438 m<sup>2</sup> of glass, 330 kilograms of nails, 2070 metres of wire, and 31,830 sheets of wallpaper. Access to building materials was of great advantage, however the quantities of materials available to former and serving soldiers was unlikely to completely satisfy total demand, or to have been distributed equably. This may explain why veterans looted building materials from occupied Europe.

Although the state provided many veterans with building materials, they would be responsible for conducting the necessary repairs themselves. Once again promises of state assistance and entitlement were counterbalanced by individual initiative and action. Popular grass-roots activism played an important part in Leningrad's reconstruction. In August 1945 the city soviet established social commissions for assistance in the repair and utilisation of housing. These organizations drew together workers, engineers, technicians and skilled tradesmen to repair buildings and the electrical, heating and water supply systems. By 1948 over 20,000 individuals organized in 2832 commissions had volunteered their skills. Between 1946 and 1947 these commissions repaired over 77,000 rooms and over a 1,000,000 m<sup>2</sup> of roofing. The

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<sup>176</sup> Kamenskii and Naumov, *Leningrad: gradostroitel'nye problemy razvitiia*, p.160 and Piliavskii, 'Arkhitectura i stroitel'stvo', p.215.

<sup>177</sup> I.Z. Maseev, "Pervye Tipovye", in Kutuzov and Levina (eds), *Vorozhdenie*, pp.236-40.

commissions proved so successful that the RSFSR Council of Ministers recommended that other cities follow Leningrad's example.<sup>178</sup>

The combination of state assistance and individual initiative was a key feature of one final piece of public policy intended to increase construction. Demobilization legislation extended a scheme for preferential credit for the repair and reconstruction of housing to veterans.<sup>179</sup> Historians, however, dispute the scheme's effectiveness. Outcomes were variable and dependent upon the effectiveness of local soviets, enterprises, trade-unions, branches of the communal bank and the energy of the local population. Implementation was hamstrung by lack of funds, shortages of building materials, a lack of technical awareness and construction skills, and excessive red-tape.<sup>180</sup> The scheme appears to have been particularly important to veterans settling in rural areas. In the course of 1945 a total of 1455 demobilized soldiers and service families received a total of 5,968,000 roubles in reconstruction credit.<sup>181</sup> In Leningrad, however, the quantity of individual construction was negligible. Workers in the Stalin metal-works, for example, planned just nine buildings in the whole of 1947.<sup>182</sup> Individual building appears to have been discouraged in the city centre, probably because of the disruption it might cause to the recreation of an idealized version of the pre-war cityscape envisaged by architects and planners.<sup>183</sup> When individual construction was permitted it was concentrated in the suburbs surrounding the city.<sup>184</sup> In January 1949 the city soviet issued a set of regulations for individual construction in suburban areas which specified streets in Kolpino, Petrodvorets and Pushkin, and a list of towns including Pavlovsk, Pargolovo, Pesochnaia, Levashovo and Beloostrov suitable for

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<sup>178</sup> A. Bubnov (ed.), *Opyt raboty obshchestvennykh komissii sodeistviia vosstanovleniia i eksploatatsii domokhoziaistv goroda Leningrada* (Leningrad: 1948) pp.7-10. Also *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.13, 31 July 1948, pp.1-2; 'Enthusiasts – Komissii sodeistviia vosstanovleniia i eksploatatsii zhilogo fonda', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 3 April 1946, p.1.

<sup>179</sup> 'Individual'nye doma dlia rabochikh i sluzhashchikh', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 17 May 1945, p.1 and Kredity demobilizovannym iz deistvuiushchei armii', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 8 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>180</sup> Mark B. Smith, 'Individual Forms of Ownership in the Urban Housing Fund of the USSR', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.86, No.2 (April 2008), pp.283-305 (pp.287-88); Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, p.96.

<sup>181</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-415/op.2/d.19/l.151.

<sup>182</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, p.96, note 74.

<sup>183</sup> Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.124-29,133.

<sup>184</sup> 'V Svoem Dome – Individual'noe stroitel'stvo v prigorodakh Leningrad', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 22 April 1946, p.2.

further development.<sup>185</sup> The scheme also came under official suspicion after it was revealed to have become subject to systematic corruption. Funds obtained from the communal bank as part of this scheme were obtained on forged documents, and were not used to finance construction.<sup>186</sup> In 1946, for example, A.V. Shershenev, a demobilized veteran, borrowed 3000 roubles from the Tikhvinskii branch of the State Bank and then disappeared.<sup>187</sup>

There were easier ways to obtain housing in the Leningrad oblast. In the north of the oblast, in territory only recently acquired from Finland, there were large numbers of homes left empty by Finns fleeing their homes. Deliberate attempts were made to repopulate the rural Vyborgskii, Koivistovskii, Iaskinskii, Rautovskii, Kannel'iarskii and Keksgolskii districts with demobilized veterans and their families. A thousand veterans and their families were to begin a new life as collective farmers in these areas. Rather than build new homes it seems likely that many occupied the empty dwellings littering the countryside.<sup>188</sup> Something similar occurred in Latvia, where levels of individual construction were low, something attributed to the mass appropriation of dwellings left vacant by owners fleeing the oncoming Red Army.<sup>189</sup> The surfeit of wooden buildings in the Leningrad oblast was such that corrupt officials ran scams to sell, break-up and relocate them to other districts. In September 1946 the police arrested Georgii Pozdiankov head of the Rautovskii district housing department. In exchange for bribes Pozdniakov had sold uninhabited buildings to private individuals. In cooperation with Krylov, a driver with the oblast transport department, with a lorry at his disposal, arrangements were made to dismantle and transport wooden buildings to different locations. Grigorii Sokol, a disabled veteran employed at a tram depot in Leningrad, paid 1500 roubles for a building to be moved to Pargolovo.<sup>190</sup> Such practices were sufficiently widespread for the oblast soviet to pass a decision banning the breaking up,

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<sup>185</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskoi gosstatizburo*, 31 March 1949, pp.6-12.

<sup>186</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskoi gosstatizburo*, No.7, 1946, p.11.

<sup>187</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskoi gosstatizburo*, No.23-24, 1946, p.20.

<sup>188</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskoi gosstatizburo*, No.16, 1945, pp.13-15; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.11/d.111/l.32; Kutuzov, *Vozrozhdenie zemli Leningradskoi*, pp.88-90.

<sup>189</sup> Smith, 'Individual Forms of Ownership', p.289.

<sup>190</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.231-231ob.

theft and unauthorised relocation of houses and other building by official organisations and private individuals.<sup>191</sup>

### **Disappointment and Resentment**

Veterans returning to Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast clearly did not expect to return to a flourishing region. Soldiers stationed on the Leningrad front would have known something of the damage wrought upon their homes. Elsewhere veterans learnt of the damage inflicted by German invaders from official propaganda. Returning soldiers understood the destructive capabilities of modern warfare as well as anybody. They did not, however, anticipate the treatment which they ultimately received. The failure to provide ‘homes for heroes’ created widespread disappointment and enormous resentment amongst Leningrad’s veterans. Expectations of deriving tangible benefits from theoretical privilege were quickly replaced by disappointment and dissatisfaction.

Veterans’ anger and disenchantment were recorded in reports written by Leningrad’s military censor, part of the regional secret police administration. These secret reports, headed ‘special communications’ (*spetssoobshchenie*), were based on excerpts of private letters written to families and friends.<sup>192</sup> However, the value of these sources as evidence of public opinion has been questioned. *Spetssoobschenie* have much in common with *svodki*, a summary reports of public opinion, which have been the subject of intense methodological debate. Popular opinion reports created by a militantly ideological state were far from a value free indication of what people really thought.<sup>193</sup> These sources inevitably over-represented ‘harmful attitudes.’ *Spetssoobschenie* were highly mediated documents. They were written according to official guidelines and templates, and the product of an extensive bureaucratic apparatus, which filtered out negative sentiments and then selected the most appropriate material for inclusion in reports.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, as Davies writes, “the choice of subjects warranting reports were dictated by regime priorities, which did not necessarily coincide with the people’s own interests (or with those of a future historian for that

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<sup>191</sup> *Biulleten’ Lenobispolkoma*, No.15, 1946, p.7.

<sup>192</sup> For background on the operation of the military censor see Robert Dale, ‘Rats and Resentment: The Demobilization of the Red Army in Postwar Leningrad, 1945-50’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.45, No.1 (January 2010), pp.113-33 (pp.124-25).

<sup>193</sup> Hellbeck, ‘Speaking Out’, pp.71-96.

<sup>194</sup> Viola, ‘Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s’, pp.45-69; Graziosi, ‘The New Soviet Archival Sources’, pp.54-56.

matter)...”<sup>195</sup> The difficulties of housing, however, were amongst the greatest challenges facing post-war Leningrad and therefore highly represented.

Despite similarities in production, these sources are qualitatively different from *svodki*. The letters from which *spetssoobshchenie* were compiled were ‘real letters’ sent to friends or family either oblivious or defiant of the censor. Large sections of letters were quoted with little or no commentary or analysis. The language in which veterans expressed their frustrations has an authenticity lacking in other sources. Rather than the ‘contrived Soviet self-representations’ or rehearsed discourses typical of *zhaloby* or *zaiavleniia*, or the anaemic language of party officials ‘speaking Bolshevik’ the letters included in these reports give the impression of real people, confronting extraordinary problems and expressing genuine emotions. To quote Rimmel these sources if they, “do nothing else, they help us humanize an often inhuman era.”<sup>196</sup>

Finding that their homes were destroyed, occupied and that official planning had failed to make adequate provision for their return many veterans were understandably angry. Some found themselves living in corridors, without any hope of finding suitable housing.<sup>197</sup> Others were totally homeless. This was not the heroes’ return that veterans felt they deserved or which they had been promised. Rage and disappointment flooded from veterans’ pens. Zakharov, amongst the first veterans demobilized in 1945, questioned why he fought for four years, yet on his return had nowhere to live, and nothing to put on his feet; “little matter, that I slept for four year in bogs (*bolotakh*), in the rain, and I arrived here and things aren’t any sweeter.”<sup>198</sup> Rather than disappointment some veterans felt insulted. Bogdanova returned from demobilization in July 1945.

“Leaving the unit so many promises were made to us, but they all turned out to be empty. Having been to the district military registration office (*raiony voennyi kommissariat*), they offered me (a place in a) hostel. All the girls are disappointed that they returned home to the city they defended. Four

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<sup>195</sup> Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.10-17 (pp.13-14).

<sup>196</sup> Lesley A. Rimmel, ‘Svodki and Popular Opinion in Stalinist Leningrad’, *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.20, Nos.1-2 (January 1999), pp.217-34 (p.233).

<sup>197</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.194.

<sup>198</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.48.

years wandering between and crawling around dugouts and suddenly this, it's very offensive.”<sup>199</sup>

This resentment was not confined to the first *eshelons* of veterans, although the military censor was more alarmed by the earliest expressions of dissatisfaction. A.I. Zaitsev vented his anger about veterans' housing provision in November 1946. His frustration tipped over into depressive thoughts.

“For what, I ask, is there to live for now, it would have been better to have been killed, than live like this. In the name of what did I fight for seven years, I didn't gain anything, they won't even give me my own room back. I ask, what is there to live for now? Where is the truth – I don't know! How much longer can I wander between hostels like an old monk (*starets*) with a sack?”<sup>200</sup>

For a number of veterans it was the interminable waiting to receive permanent housing that generated the most anger. One wrote in November 1946 that he had been a civilian for two months, had failed to find either work or housing, and was no closer to receiving any form of solution.<sup>201</sup> On 18 July 1945 N.I. Novikov wrote to his wife about the progress of demobilization. For him any satisfaction derived from leaving the army was tarnished by not finding housing.

“I began the torment (connected with obtaining) living space, they promised me (housing) no sooner than in five-six months, but I suppose that deadline won't be kept... I've temporarily registered in a hostel for demobilized veterans, but at night I stay with Marusa. I want to explore different options to try and speed up receiving living space.”<sup>202</sup>

Novikov's prediction was almost certainly right; most veterans waited months even years. A.T. Zarubin was demobilized on 13 July 1945. He was impressed by the welcome veterans received at the station, and the way in which they were transported to their homes by car. Reality kicked in the following day, when he went to the district housing department and was told there were no available apartments. He spent five days, from morning to night, kicking his heels at the office.<sup>203</sup> Zarubin's eloquent letter was amongst several which prompted an investigation by the Leningrad soviet. His home had been broken up for fuel during the blockade, and his family was still in

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<sup>199</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.83ob.

<sup>200</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.168.

<sup>201</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.167.

<sup>202</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/82ob.

<sup>203</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.82.

evacuation. Having been placed on the housing waiting list, he returned to the district housing administration seven times. On 24 July he temporarily registered with an acquaintance.<sup>204</sup>

Veterans hated paperwork, lengthy queues and being constantly pushed from one office to another. As one veteran wrote in August 1945:

“You can’t find an end anywhere; they only write that there is everything for the demobilized. You go to one institution and they send you to another and so on. And so you travel from one end of the city to the other without end.”<sup>205</sup>

Another veteran spoke of having to do a daily round visiting the chairman of the district soviet, the district prosecutor, the district housing administration, the building administrator, and the police. She felt that she would go mad before she succeeded in getting her room back. “In general there is a lot of talk about the reception of the demobilized, but when I arrived, I wasn’t able to get anything from anywhere.”<sup>206</sup> F.I. Khaitovich’s apartment on ulitsa Rubinsteinina had been occupied by a re-evacuee in October 1944.<sup>207</sup> He was angered that it took so long to enforce his rights: “We fought, we tormented ourselves, we suffered, and how cruelly we suffered. We returned as victors and suddenly... this terrible inertia and bureaucracy.”<sup>208</sup> This Kafkaesque bureaucratic nightmare was a world away from legal entitlement and privilege.

Worse still was the cold-hearted, sometimes mocking, attitude of bureaucrats. The official who placed Pavlov, an officer demobilized in the autumn of 1946, on the housing waiting list insensitively told him to marry a woman who already had a room.<sup>209</sup> One female veteran, helped by a friend to write a letter, reported that the district prosecutor and chairman of the district soviet just laughed at her when she went to see them.<sup>210</sup> Khaitovich complained of the, “loathsome and outrageous attitude

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<sup>204</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.85-88 (l.87).

<sup>205</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.83ob.

<sup>206</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.83.

<sup>207</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.85.

<sup>208</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.82ob.

<sup>209</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.193.

<sup>210</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.47ob.

towards the demobilized,” amongst officials.<sup>211</sup> Veterans often felt that they were dealing with a layer of society which lacked basic decency, and had been corrupted by the war. On his return M.I. Krylov learnt that he was to lose the room in which he and the five members of his family had lived before the war. Faced with the prospect of moving his family into a hostel for single veterans he expressed the burning rage typical of resentful veterans:

“all of this [veterans’ entitlements and rights] remains empty words, thanks to those who saved their skins deep in the rear camouflaged from the threat of death, who accumulated sizeable capital and now having returned home get the best apartments, we who lived through the horrors of the hardest days of the war once again have to wander around as if we are unworthy of society, for the salvation of which we spilt our blood and covered the motherland with the everlasting glory of victory and all of that to turn up discarded on the edge of life.”<sup>212</sup>

It wasn’t just angry young men who learnt to ‘speak veteran’.<sup>213</sup> An intercepted letter written by a female veteran on 1 August 1945 expressed low regard for bureaucrats. In her mind concern for veterans extended no further than clean floors and a vase of flowers at demobilization points.

“When I began to speak to the prosecutor about how my living space had been demolished and that I had nowhere to live, he tried to change the conversation to any other subject, if only to escape a sore point... It would have been better to have come back earlier, to not return home to see these disgusting bureaucrats, which during the war were able to firmly entrench themselves in the rear, and arrange their own well-being, and now take up prominent positions in order to support their own existence.”<sup>214</sup>

Accusations that some form of ‘lubrication’ was required to get administrative wheels to turn were a constant feature of veterans’ letters. Writing in June 1946 one veteran was convinced that; “The queue for receiving living space exists as a screen, while space is given out by *blat* and bribes. It is only possible to get two metres of land on death.”<sup>215</sup> Estimates of the size of bribes passing hands to secure accommodation

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<sup>211</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.46-46ob.

<sup>212</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.47ob.

<sup>213</sup> Here I borrow and deliberately misquote the term ‘speaking Bolshevik’ from Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilisation* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1997), pp.198-237.

<sup>214</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.47.

<sup>215</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.89.



ranged from 3000 to 25,000 roubles.<sup>216</sup> On the evidence of veterans' intercepted letters the belief that housing allocation was corrupt was widespread. Although this may have reflected the military censors' sensitivity towards mention of corruption there was abundant evidence that corruption was a genuine problem. The scarcity of housing created a situation in which bribery and corruption became highly lucrative, something against which the city soviet waged a semi-public war. Almost every issue of *Leningradskaia pravda* and *Vechernii Leningrad* carried reports of corruption and rudeness amongst housing officials.<sup>217</sup> A.F. Shigoreva, a building administrator (*upravkhoz*), was arrested in May 1946. She had kept information about vacant living space from the district housing department, hiding it from official registers. In exchange for bribes she illegally housed people in these spaces. Over a year she illegally settled 37 rooms. A further nine empty rooms were discovered on her arrest.<sup>218</sup> Another *upravkhoz* was not only speculating in empty rooms, but also selling the property of deceased, evacuated or conscripted former residents.<sup>219</sup> Other building administrators would add people to housing waiting lists in exchange for bribes.<sup>220</sup> Given this background veterans' accusations of corruption were entirely plausible.

The feeling that veterans would have been better off had they remained in the army was a constant refrain in veterans' letters. Many wrote to comrades still in uniform telling them precisely this. The possibility that the Red Army offered a more comfortable existence than civilian life was perhaps the most eloquent evidence of the state's failure to meet veterans' expectations. In the minds of resentful veterans, the experience of finding somewhere to live quickly revealed the rhetoric of Stalinist care and concern for the glorious defenders of the motherland to be a fiction. The complexities of reclaiming housing through legal channels and/or obtaining living space through district housing administrations were amongst the first interactions many veterans would have with state representatives after their return. This first post-war encounter with officialdom would set a pattern for their future dealings with minor state functionaries. In the minds of many veterans heartless and corrupt 'rear-line rats', who had shirked military service in favour of administrative jobs safe in the rear, became

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<sup>216</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.90 and TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.46ob.

<sup>217</sup> White, 'After the War', p.1155.

<sup>218</sup> 'Proischestviia. Upravkhoz – Vziatnik', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 16 May 1946, p.4.

<sup>219</sup> 'Prestuplenia upravkhoza', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 11 December 1946, p.4.

<sup>220</sup> 'Sud – Prestuplenia upravkhoza', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 3 October 1946, p.4.

their preferred scapegoats. Encouraged by specific attacks on bureaucrats published in the local press and a public culture which continually blamed ‘enemies’ for social, economic and political difficulties, disenchanted veterans vented their spleens at minor state functionaries, channelling their anger away from central political leaders or the vagaries of the Soviet political system.<sup>221</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Veterans’ treatment at the hand of housing officials and legal representatives led many to question their wartime sacrifices and created doubt about how easy it would be to fit into a society in which bureaucracy and corruption were now commonplace. Ultimately the difficulties of finding housing stemmed from the level of damage to the housing stock and basic infrastructure in Leningrad and the surrounding region, the high demand for housing amongst veterans, re-evacuees and new migrants, the slowness of reconstruction and the policies pursued by the central party-state and local leaders. Although the sympathetic help of a conscientious housing administrator could soften the disappointment ex-servicemen felt at the loss of housing or the prospect of years on waiting lists, the shortage of housing remained a constant problem. Complete reconstruction of the city would take decades rather than years. Despite their theoretical entitlements Leningrad’s veterans could not be protected from the post-war housing crisis. Years before the systems of privileges extended to veterans was eroded and dismantled, veterans in and around Leningrad already understood that such benefits only existed on paper. In the sphere of housing, at least, reintegration to civilian life meant sharing in the abysmal living conditions experienced by other Leningraders.

Finding that official entitlements rarely corresponded with reality many veterans pursued their own strategies to obtain housing. Some individuals were so disenchanted by the hassle involved in obtaining handouts that they made their own arrangements wholly independent of the state; others found ways to circumvent the official distribution mechanisms. Veterans barraged legal authorities and local government with appeals for assistance and letters of complaint, attempted to discredit opponents in housing disputes, exploited loopholes in the residency permit rules, or obtained living space through informal channels, which included paying the bribes which so angered many of their comrades. Rather than being a privileged layer of society rewarded by the state, veterans were forced onto their own resources. Ironically, entitlement and

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<sup>221</sup> Dale, ‘Rats and Resentment’.

privilege did not create a loyal social class grateful to the state, but a resentful body of men and women aggrieved by the difficulties they experienced on their return.

## **Chapter 2: “As in battle– as in labour”. The Re-mobilization of Demobilized Veterans**



**Figure 2: V. Koretskii, *Kak v boiu - tak i v trude* (As in battle - as in labour)1948.<sup>1</sup>**

Human societies have faced the challenge of finding suitable employment for returning veterans for as long as war has existed. But, the difficulties of demobilization have changed dramatically over past centuries. Before the advent of mass standing armies in the modern era military service was largely seasonal and military campaigns relatively short. While soldiers spent less time away from home reintegration into the civilian economy was comparatively straightforward. With the creation of professional armies, introduced into Imperial Russia in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great's military reforms, re-employing discharged soldiers became increasingly difficult. The longer soldiers spent within the military the harder it became to begin successful civilian careers.<sup>2</sup> In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries a new set of pressures were created by the development of modern industrialized warfare fought by mass

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in N.N. Glushko et. al., *Velikaia pobeda i vozrozhdenie Moskvy* (Moscow: Kontakt-kul'tura, 2005), p.79.

<sup>2</sup> Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, 'Social Misfits: Veterans and Soldiers' Families in Servile Russia', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.59, No.2 (April 1995), pp.215-35.

conscript armies. After both World Wars almost all combatant nations experienced difficulties re-employing the large numbers of veterans whose working lives had been temporarily interrupted by war. Post-war labour markets were flooded by returning soldiers. The state was increasingly expected to play a role in helping veterans find work. Creating employment opportunities in economies being recalibrated from wartime to peacetime production was extremely challenging.

From the perspective of individual veterans finding employment was a critical moment. Work provided an important way for ex-servicemen to regain control of their lives. After years of having food, clothing and shelter provided by armies work gave veterans their independence. Although there was a strong material dimension to finding work it was about more than earning money. Work is central to human society. It provides an experience that frames our lives, occupies the majority of our time and helps define identities. Work was central to the process of civilian readjustment. By re-entering the workforce veterans became fully productive members of society, wiping away any liminality in their social position. By resuming pre-war trades and professions, or learning new skills, demobilized veterans could put their wartime experiences behind them and focus on the future.

In the years following the First World War European and North American societies were far from successful in re-employing demobilized veterans. In Britain after 1918 unemployed ex-servicemen became familiar figures. Robert Graves recalled in the early 1920s: “Ex-service men continually coming to the door selling boot-laces and asking for cast-off shoes and shirts.”<sup>3</sup> By January 1922 unemployment in Britain had reached over two million. The British Legion claimed that there were half a million unemployed ex-servicemen.<sup>4</sup> Veterans were given remarkably little assistance in re-entering the workplace. A bankrupt economy was unable to give veterans the support they deserved. American First World War veterans returned to face high unemployment, runaway inflation and rising living costs. Defeated German veterans feared the spectre of mass unemployment, created by the cessation of war production. In late 1918 and early 1919 German unemployment peaked at approximately six to seven per cent of the labour force. Politicians feared that unemployment threatened the fabric of German society and the state’s future viability. However, the fear of unemployment

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (Oxford: Berghan, 1995), p.285.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis Winter, *Death’s Men. Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 1978), p.241.

has been exaggerated. As Richard Bessel writes; “Most soldiers returned to their jobs fairly quickly, and the sudden shift of millions of men from field grey into mufti does not seem to have put the German labour market out of joint.”<sup>5</sup> Unemployment was largely short-term and remarkably low given the extent of post-war problems.

Memories of unemployment after the First World War, although exaggerated, heavily influenced planning for demobilization after the Second World War in both Britain and America. Many observers feared that demobilization would result in a return to mass unemployment. In Britain forty-three per cent of respondents to a Mass Observation study conducted in the autumn of 1943 expected heavy post-war unemployment.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-six per cent of American soldiers surveyed in May 1945 anticipated a depression.<sup>7</sup> Legislators and planners were keen to avoid the supposed mistakes of 1919-20, and were conscious of the need to support dislocated labour markets by re-employing veterans.<sup>8</sup> The US Army’s Research Branch, for example, began studying soldiers’ post-war employment plans as early as the summer of 1943.<sup>9</sup> The combination of active social policy, combined with an acute labour shortage, made it easier to re-employ British and American veterans after 1945 than had been anticipated. Soldiers were rarely reduced to selling matches on the streets as they had been after 1918. As Allport writes; “Postwar Britain would be a bleak and austere place in many ways, but few who wanted work were left idle.” Although veterans often found the transition back into paid employment difficult, many were the beneficiaries of opportunities created by a consistently high demand for skilled labour throughout the late 1940s.<sup>10</sup>

Although re-employment played an important part in demobilizing armies in all post-war societies, the historiography of the Red Army’s demobilization after the Great Patriotic War has focused particularly closely on veterans’ economic remobilization.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Bessel, ‘Unemployment and Demobilization in Germany after the First World War’, in Richard J. Evans and Dick Geary (eds), *The German Unemployed. Experiences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.23-43 (p.26); Bessel, ‘The Great War in German Memory’, pp.29-32.

<sup>6</sup> David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain. 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p.45.

<sup>7</sup> Stouffer (et. al.), *The American Soldier*, p.598.

<sup>8</sup> Englander, ‘Soldiers and Social Reform’, pp.318-26.

<sup>9</sup> Stouffer (et. al.), *The American Soldier*, p.598.

<sup>10</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, p.135; Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home*, pp.73-75.

This contrasts with a lack of interest in the return to work of several million men in less than three years amongst historians of the British labour force.<sup>11</sup> The very first Soviet studies of veterans' homecomings treated demobilization and re-employment as synonyms. The most influential of these studies, published by Donchenko in 1970, explored the injection of manpower provided by demobilized veterans. Donchenko argued, on the basis of national statistics, that veterans quickly and successfully returned to work, and provided a solution to a post-war cadres problem. Ex-servicemen included large numbers of skilled workers, as well as individuals who had acquired administrative and political skills in the army, which equipped them to assume managerial roles in the industrial and agricultural sectors, and in party, soviet and social organisations.<sup>12</sup>

This argument mirrored the official version of demobilization and has become the standard narrative. It has had supporters amongst western historians, most notably Sheila Fitzpatrick. Writing in 1985, without the level of archival access currently enjoyed by researchers, Fitzpatrick argued that military service during the Great Patriotic War led to upward social mobility for Red Army veterans. Large numbers of veterans returning to the village became kolkhoz chairmen, other peasants took advantage of their relative freedom of movement to join the urban workforce, while soldiers who had risen through the ranks or who had joined the party were promoted to administrative or managerial positions.<sup>13</sup> Although Fitzpatrick's questioning of what constituted normality in post-war Soviet society is of lasting importance, the level of social mobility amongst veterans is ripe for reassessment. A number of historians, however, continue to view ex-servicemen largely in terms of their economic contribution to late Stalinist society.<sup>14</sup> More recently Edele has offered a more subtle analysis of veterans' prospects for economic and social advancement.<sup>15</sup> He argues that individual veterans enjoyed social mobility, but collectively veterans' increased wartime status did not translate into elevated civilian status. There was no large-scale post-war

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<sup>11</sup> Englander, 'Soldiers and Social Reform', p.319; Allport, *Demobbed*, p.134.

<sup>12</sup> Donchenko, 'Sovetskoi Armii i reshenie problemy kadrov', pp.96-102.

<sup>13</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society', pp.136-37. Jerry Hough made a similar observation about collective farm chairmen. Jerry Hough, 'The Changing Nature of the Kolkhoz Chairman', in James R. Millar (ed.), *The Soviet Rural Community* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp.103-20 (p.106).

<sup>14</sup> Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction*, pp.18-22.

<sup>15</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.129-49.

cadres exchange, comparable to that in the 1920s and 1930s described by Fitzpatrick, to be exploited by veterans.<sup>16</sup> In practice; “There was little official across-the-board affirmative action policy for veterans qua veterans in the immediate post-war years, which would have contributed to a general elevation of the social standing of all veterans.”<sup>17</sup>

This chapter examines the reintegration of Leningrad’s veterans into the urban and rural workforce in the months and years immediately following their return. The workplace was conceived as the most important battleground in turning ex-servicemen back into ordinary citizens. The state’s main yardstick for measuring demobilization’s success was the rate at which veterans were re-employed. As such it provides an important indication of veterans’ post-war readjustment. This chapter challenges the official myth of veterans’ successful remobilization. It argues that the transition back into the civilian workforce was exceptionally difficult even for veterans who found suitable employment. It builds upon Edele’s analysis of veterans’ prospects for social advancement, offering a detailed local analysis of how veterans were reintegrated into the workforce. Leningrad provides an important illustration of how difficult many veterans found it to obtain employment. Despite wartime damage Leningrad remained a major city at the heart of the Soviet industrial economy. The Leningrad oblast was home to important industrial enterprises, raw-material production plants and agriculture. Wartime depopulation created a local labour shortage that if Donchenko’s model of veterans’ upward social mobility were true, should have created a wealth of employment opportunities. But the situation in Leningrad was more complicated. Rather than enjoying upward mobility, Leningrad’s veterans were largely unable to satisfy their expectations for ‘good’ employment. Former soldiers were often forced to accept menial or low-paid positions. Veterans’ attitudes towards the process of re-entering the workplace and the kinds of work obtained reveals much about their hopes and expectations for civilian life, and their general attitude towards demobilization. Veterans were far from a cohesive social group with a collective experience of re-entering the workplace. They found employment in all areas of the economy, not just heavy industry and agriculture. The experience of finding work varied enormously; different veterans had different problems, and women, officers and the youngest

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<sup>16</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.148-49.



veterans faced specific problems, which have largely been obscured by the propaganda myth of upward mobility.

### **Propaganda and the Duty to Work**

Soviet veterans, when compared to their former British and American allies, were given remarkably little support finding employment. British veterans were entitled to fifty-six days of paid discharge leave. Their pre-war employers were required to re-hire them for between six to twelve months, depending on the length of their pre-war employment. Veterans had to contact their employers within a month of demobilization, and begin work within a further month.<sup>18</sup> The American G.I. Bill offered veterans unemployment benefit of \$20 a week for up to a year, the so called 52-20 club, as well as loans to start businesses and financial assistance for vocational training. Federal agencies and state administrations also pursued a policy of veterans' preference in civil service appointments.<sup>19</sup>

Red Army veterans were led to believe that Soviet state support far surpassed anything planned by its former allies. The propaganda campaign which accompanied the passing of Soviet demobilization regulations stressed that only Soviet socialist society could guarantee to meet ex-servicemen's needs.<sup>20</sup> The claim that "there is not another country in the world where demobilization legislation was so suffused with care for soldiers and their families," became an official mantra.<sup>21</sup> Demobilization legislation was celebrated as an expression of Soviet society's respect for veterans. The idea that only socialism could guarantee veterans work and a secure future became a central propaganda message.<sup>22</sup> In October 1945 A. Falin, Leningrad's chief prosecutor, reiterated the uniqueness of the Soviet promise to re-employ veterans: "Such a wide formulation is only possible in a socialist country. In any other state concern about work placement (*trudoustroistvo*) of demobilized soldiers is their private business."<sup>23</sup> The press hammered home this point by reporting international plaudits for Soviet

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<sup>18</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, pp.136-37.

<sup>19</sup> Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*, p.6; Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home*, pp.31-32; Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War. When America's Soldiers Came Home – From Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), p.289.

<sup>20</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.34.

<sup>21</sup> 'Vsenarodnaia zabota o demobilizovannykh voynakh', *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> 'Demobilizovannym voynom dostoinyiu vstrechy', *Trud*, 6 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> A. Falin, 'Okhranit' prava demobilizovannykh', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 14 October 1945, p.2.

legislation, and by contrasting Red Army veterans' prospects with those of veterans in capitalist societies.<sup>24</sup> *Krokodil*, the official satirical journal, for example, published a number of cartoons highlighting the plight of unemployed American veterans, including images of veterans sleeping on street benches and begging for work alongside Washington's Capitol building.<sup>25</sup> The Soviet experience of remobilizing veterans, as I will argue, was more a matter of image than reality.

Veterans' employment rights were outlined in clause seven of the 23 June 1945 demobilization decree. Ex-servicemen were required to resume work within thirty days of demobilization. Local soviets, the management of industrial enterprises and other local institutions were obliged to provide demobilized soldiers with work no lower than their pre-war employment and commensurate with skills and experiences obtained in the army. Volunteers had the theoretical right to regain their pre-war jobs.<sup>26</sup> Legislation was silent on how employment rights would operate in practice, or whether post-war jobs should be equivalent to pre-war jobs in status or salary. There was no guidance on how to treat veterans whose workplaces have been destroyed, closed, evacuated or converted to another form of production; all serious problems in Leningrad. In such circumstances local officials appear to have had a measure of flexibility in how the law was applied. Demobilization legislation then was not implemented uniformly across the Soviet Union. Local factors clearly influenced veterans' chances in the post-war workplace.

Demobilization was increasingly presented as a gift earned by veterans, not the state's duty towards those who fought for it.<sup>27</sup> Demobilization came with strings attached, most importantly the commitment to become a productive citizen. What Jeffrey Brooks terms the Stalinist economy of the gift required ex-servicemen to repay the state for its fatherly attention.<sup>28</sup> As one propagandist explained:

“You honestly served the motherland (*rodina*) during the years of the war, you were in the first ranks of fighters for the freedom, honour and independence of the Soviet fatherland (*otchizna*), you

<sup>24</sup> ‘Vsenarodnaia zabota o demobilizovannykh voynakh’, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 10 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Ni voiny, ni raboty’, *Krokodil*, 30 October 1945, p.12; ‘Polnoe Ravenstvo’, *Krokodil*, 30 April 1947, p.8 and ‘Iz biografii razvedchika Dzhona Garrisa’, *Krokodil*, October-November 1946, p.16.

<sup>26</sup> *Leningradskaia pravda*, 24 June 1945, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.307.

<sup>28</sup> Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!* p.199.

will now be in the first ranks of workers in the USSR, fighting for the reconstruction and further blossoming of the power and glory of the Soviet state.’<sup>29</sup>

Veterans’ post-war duty was clear. They were to return to work and devote themselves to production with the same diligence and determination demonstrated at the front. This message was projected most clearly by propaganda posters. The artist Viktor Koretskii, for example, produced posters which exhorted veterans to devote themselves to civilian labour as if it was an extension of battle. Popular slogans formed the posters’ titles: *We were victorious in battle – we will be victorious in labour*, 1947 (Figure 3) and *As in battle – as in labour*, 1948 (Figure 2).<sup>30</sup> Visually the posters were split into frames juxtaposing veterans’ wartime past with their future civilian achievements. Infantrymen were transformed into miners; tank drivers into combine-harvester drivers. Commanders of guns became commanders of production.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the second half of 1945 and 1946 the national and local press were full of reports describing veterans returning to work, usually in skilled or managerial positions.<sup>32</sup> Although the language of these articles now appears stale and repetitious they nonetheless carried important signals for the average Soviet citizen, and they reveal a great deal about official priorities.<sup>33</sup> Demobilization and *trudoustroistvo* became synonymous; confirming the state’s obsession with harnessing veterans’ labour. Newspapers which failed to devote sufficient attention to veterans’ re-employment faced intense criticism. Between August and October 1946 several regional newspapers failed to comment on veterans’ *trudoustroistvo*, and even failed to mention it in editions celebrating *Den’ Tankistov* (Tankists’ Day).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Demobilizovannomy voyny Krasnoi Armii* (Tbilisi: Izdanie politicheskogo upravleniia Tbilisi, 1946), p.18.

<sup>30</sup> Glushko, *Velikaia pobeda*, p.44, 62 and 79.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Snova na rodnom zavod’, *Trud*, 23 February 1946, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> See for example ‘Moskva gotovitsia k priemu demobilizovannykh vtoroi ocheredi’, *Trud*, 27 September 1945, p.1; ‘Demobilizovannye voiny na predpriatiiakh’, *Trud*, 25 December 1945, p.2 and ‘Byvshie frontoviki na rukovodiashchei rabote’, *Trud* 20 December 1945, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, pp.224-34. Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction* pp.3-7.

<sup>34</sup> The second Sunday in September. RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.147/ll.180-6 (l.182).



Figure 3: V. Koretskii, *Pobezhdali v boiakh - Pobezhdaem v trude* ( We were victorious in battle - we will be victorious in labour), 1947.<sup>35</sup>

The regional press in the Leningrad oblast was acutely aware of the importance of communicating to veterans their duty to return to work. *Leningradskaiia pravda*, *Vechernii Leningrad* and factory and district newspapers were full of reports about veterans returning to work. These articles stressed that Leningrad's veterans were highly skilled workers making a vital contribution to post-war reconstruction, or were employed in administrative or managerial capacities.<sup>36</sup> They also created the impression that veterans were returning to the same factories, sometimes even the same workshops and workbenches, from which they had been mobilized. These articles evoked the metaphor of a family reunited, something highlighted in their titles. Veterans were said to be working enthusiastically, and to have been well received by their colleagues. The emphasis on veterans' returning to pre-war jobs and communities projected important messages about the healing of wartime wounds. This was particularly important in Leningrad where the blockade had destroyed family networks and whole communities. In other post-war societies women and families were often expected to ease veterans'

<sup>35</sup> Glushko et. al., *Velikaia pobeda*, p.62.

<sup>36</sup> 'Demobilizovannye na rukovodiashchei rabote', *Leningradskaiia pravda*, 24 November 1945, p.2.

reintegration into civilian society.<sup>37</sup> Yet with so many civilian deaths and so many service families still in evacuation, Leningrad's workplaces were given a critical role in facilitating veterans' transition. Propaganda suggested that the nurturing and supportive functions routinely considered a woman's duty were, at least in part, being discharged by workplace collectives.<sup>38</sup>

In attempting to balance the imperative to re-mobilise veterans' productive capacity, with an emotional need to recognise wartime achievements propaganda disseminated mixed messages.<sup>39</sup> It encouraged veterans to become ordinary citizens, but simultaneously suggested that veterans enjoyed a special status, distinguishing them from the rest of society. This paradox could be hard to reconcile in soldiers' minds. On one hand the war was presented as an aberrant experience, which had disrupted normal lives. Veterans were therefore expected to demobilize, reintegrate and stop claiming special rewards as quickly as possible.<sup>40</sup> They were encouraged to think of themselves as workers first, and veterans second. Returning to work was partly about resuming normal quotidian rhythms after the drama and excitement of war. As one newspaper article from January 1947 explained thousands of heroes, their chests covered in medals, were returning to ordinary jobs, where they could once again become ordinary citizens.<sup>41</sup> Veterans were to put the war behind them, and concentrate upon the future. Indeed, the privileges of demobilization depended on a tacit agreement to repress darker memories of wartime experience and not to wash the Red Army's dirty linen in public.<sup>42</sup> Yet, as one poet observed wartime memories could not be packed away as easily as an old uniform.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Lynne Atwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity 1922-1953* (Basingstoke: Macmillian, 1999), pp.155-58; Vera Dunham, *In Stalin's Time. Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, Enlarged and updated edition (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1990), pp.214-24; Anna Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls', The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944-1946', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.73 (June 2001), pp.307-31. Susan M. Hartmann, 'Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on women's obligations to returning World War II veterans', *Women's Studies*, Vol.5, No.3 (1978), pp.223-39.

<sup>38</sup> On the role of collectives see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia. A Study in Practices* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Edele makes a similar point, but characterises these messages differently, *Soviet Veterans*, p.36.

<sup>40</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.12.

<sup>41</sup> 'Nezabyvamo', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 26 January 1947, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.307.

<sup>43</sup> Y.Yakolev, 'Frontovaia shapka', *Znamia*, No.6 (1947), p.80 quoted in Dunham, *In Stalin's Time*, p.9.

On the other hand the Great Patriotic War became a founding moment for Soviet society, which allegedly fostered positive qualities amongst soldiers. The bravery, decisiveness, stubbornness, resourcefulness, self-confidence and leadership skills that veterans demonstrated at the front had a practical application in the civilian economy. Exemplary veterans were celebrated as role models for Soviet society. In March 1946 *Vechernii Leningrad*, for example, published an article describing veterans as the ‘gold reserve’ of Soviet labour:

“These cadres have been through the rigorous school of the Great Patriotic War. They have learned to surmount any difficulty; they found liberty and persistence in achieving these ends. They occupy an honoured and glorious place in the struggle for the realization of the grandiose Stalinist Fourth Five Year Plan.”<sup>44</sup>

Re-employed veterans were required to become exemplars of labour discipline, to be active participants in socialist competition, and leading workers in the battle to fulfil and over-fulfil production plans.<sup>45</sup> A wave of popular novels built upon tropes in the press, and played an important part in the creation of a propaganda stereotype of veterans as exemplary citizens.<sup>46</sup> Devoted to the reconstruction of the countryside or raising industrial production ex-servicemen become the positive hero *par excellence*.<sup>47</sup>

Special status was balanced by social expectations. Victory could not be allowed to go to veterans’ heads. Veterans were not to rest on their laurels. As a pocketbook for ex-servicemen reminded its readers:

“You are obliged, as your duty before the motherland, to always and everywhere uphold the highest honour and virtue of the Red Army, and on returning to the motherland to be an example of modesty, discipline, orderliness and procedure.”<sup>48</sup>

Rather than being judged on wartime achievements, the true mark of a hero was how he behaved after demobilization. As the hero of Babaevskii’s *Cavalier of the Gold Star* is reminded:

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Zolotoi fond zavodi’, *Vechernii Leningrad*, 4 March 1946, p.1.

<sup>45</sup> *Demobilizovannomy voiny Krasnoi Armii*, pp.17-18.

<sup>46</sup> S.P. Babayevsky, *Cavalier of the Gold Star*, trans. by Ruth Kirsch (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1956); P.A. Pavlenko, *Happiness*, trans. by J. Fineberg (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950). See also Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, pp.49-50, 314-17.

<sup>47</sup> On positive heroes see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp.46-89.

<sup>48</sup> *Demobilizovannomy voiny Krasnoi Armii*, pp.7-8.

“You’ll have to renew your military glory every day in your work, so it will not be tarnished and appear corroded with conceit. They say that the decorations on a soldier’s chest are the mirror of his soul. That’s probably quite right. But in that mirror people see only our past and our present; the future must find its reflection in our deeds.”<sup>49</sup>

Surrounded by agitation before, during and after demobilization it was hardly surprising that many veterans internalized this rhetoric. The propaganda campaign’s strangely hypnotic language was designed to penetrate consciousness. Both Edele and Weiner have observed veterans’ strong identification with the heroes of post-war novels.<sup>50</sup> Red Army veterans were attracted to characters which reflected their own self-image, in the same way that American soldiers in Vietnam emulated the characters John Wayne played in war films.<sup>51</sup> After demobilization many veterans did exactly what was expected of them; they immediately became exemplary workers and started to over-fulfil the plan.<sup>52</sup> According to the press Leningrad’s veterans were clear on their duty to become model workers. In October 1945 a conference of demobilized veterans organized in Voznesenskii district of the Leningrad oblast demonstrated veterans’ ability to assimilate familiar propaganda tropes. One veteran was reported to have declared; “We weren’t afraid of bullets, nor shells, nor whistles over our heads. Why would we be afraid of work?” Another former soldier was reported stating; “Our duty is to prove that we are not only good soldiers, but good labourers.”<sup>53</sup> On 19 August 1945 *Krest’ianskaia pravda*, the Luzhskii raion’s district newspaper, published a series of pledges from veterans to work as they had fought in battle.<sup>54</sup> Virtually every factory proudly boasted of exemplary veterans achieving impressive feats of Stakhanovism. Elektrosila’s factory newspaper reported many veterans fulfilling their production targets many times over.<sup>55</sup> One of Elektrosila’s demobilized employees concluded an article with a typical expression of official rhetoric. “Everybody asks me: well *frontovik*,

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<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.316.

<sup>50</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.50, Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.96.

<sup>51</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp.25-29.

<sup>52</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.35.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Iz poslednei pochti – “frontovik prishel domoi”’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 16 October 1945, p.3.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Trudit’sia tak, kak srazhalis’ v boiu’, *Krest’ianskaia pravda*, 19 August 1945, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Tri normy’, *Elektrosila*, 5 January 1946, p.4; ‘V trude, kak v boiu’, *Elektrosila*, 2 April 1946, p.1; ‘Primer dlia mnogikh’, *Elektrosila*, 30 April 1946, p.1.

how are you doing? How are you adapting to civilian life after the war? Well I answer: it's like this – you've got to roll up your sleeves and work, and work.”<sup>56</sup>

In many of these instances veterans were ‘speaking Bolshevik’, and merely parroting official language in public settings, whilst maintaining private attitudes towards their post-war social status. The propaganda press could be expected to propagate the image of veterans as exemplary figures. Yet internal party documents reported the same readiness for veterans to knuckle down to reconstruction.<sup>57</sup> This suggests that not only had many veterans internalized official rhetoric, but also so had many of administrators monitoring veterans. However, we should not dismiss the prospect that many ex-servicemen genuinely identified with the image of the model worker. Leningrad was a city with a strong industrial heritage proud of the achievements of its working class. Having left the army behind Leningraders may have found readopting working class identities a comfort in a confusing environment. Furthermore, the manner in which veterans were incorporated into the workforce was impressive. Many made an important contribution to reconstruction, achieving remarkable things in difficult circumstances. But, the experience of finding work and re-integrating into the workforce was often more complicated than the official version of demobilization acknowledged. Although historians have accepted much of the propaganda campaign surrounding veterans’ re-employment as fact, un-employment and under-employment were real problems.

### **The Return to the Post-war Workplace**

Settling back into the civilian workplace was a challenge for all veterans. Former soldiers were not returning to model workplaces, but confusing and disorderly environments. Soldiers, like Konstantin Simonov and Boris Galen, who imagined life as a holiday or fairy-tale like existence, were bound to be disappointed by their rapid remobilization.<sup>58</sup> Of course almost anything would have been a disappointment when compared to wartime dreams. Work, especially in heavy industrial and construction industries, was exhausting and relentless. Many workplaces continued to demand that their employees worked long shifts, even after the eight-hour day had theoretically been

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Zasuchit’ rukava, da rabotat’, rabotat’’, *Elektrosila*, 12 November 1945, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/l.36; RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.471/l.98; RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.471/l.89; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.111/l.55.

<sup>58</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.34.



reinstated. The return to work was anything but a therapeutic return to normality. As one veteran wrote to his brother:

“I will tell you openly that civilian life and employment did not receive us as I thought. We rushed home and it turns out that there is very little joy here. One puts one’s entire soul into work from the morning to late at night. In general one works like a horse and lives like a dog.”<sup>59</sup>

In material terms workplaces in both Leningrad and the surrounding countryside were not the same places that veterans had known before the war. Aleksei Gonchukov, who we encountered earlier, succeeded in engineering a return to his factory in November 1946. He was struck by how much the factory had changed.

“The factory was not the same factory which we left behind when leaving for the front. War had left deep wounds on the factory. The factory was separated from the enemy’s position by three to four kilometres. Looking at the factory made you involuntarily remember all the unhappiness that the war brought our people.”<sup>60</sup>

Such a description could have applied to any number of Leningrad factories. Workplaces, like housing, suffered from heavy wartime bombing and shelling. The Izhorskii factory’s premises in Kolpino, for example, were heavily damaged.<sup>61</sup> When veterans began to return to work many factories were still being rebuilt. Unglazed windows and broken heating systems made it difficult to protect workers from the elements. The only source of heat in many workshops during Leningrad’s harsh winters continued to be braziers.<sup>62</sup> In November 1946, for example, three workers at the Bolshevik factory complained that temperatures were so low it was impossible to work. Similar complaints were recorded at other plants.<sup>63</sup> Many factories were uncomfortable, chaotic and even dangerous places. A party report from February 1946 painted a frightening picture of dilapidated workshops where snowdrifts piled up in broken window frames and sections of rusty ventilation piping frequently fell from roofs onto the workers below.<sup>64</sup> Industrial accidents were commonplace. In November 1946 one

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<sup>59</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.169.

<sup>60</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.333/l.162.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Novoe Kolpino, Vozrozhdenie goroda’, *Vechernii Leningrad*, 16 February 1946, p.2.

<sup>62</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.92.

<sup>63</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7480/l.59.

<sup>64</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7484/l.72-75 (l.73).

worker was killed and nine others were injured when compressed oxygen cylinders exploded in a workshop.<sup>65</sup>

The workforce to which veterans returned had also changed beyond all recognition. In April 1945 women constituted 76 per cent of Leningrad's industrial workforce, compared to 47 per cent in 1940. By 1950 women still amounted to 57 per cent of the workforce.<sup>66</sup> The change was even more striking in some production sectors. Women's share of the workforce in garment factories rose from 83.4 per cent in 1940 to 98.6 per cent in 1945, from 79.6 per cent to 90.2 per cent in textile production; 55.9 per cent to 89 per cent in wood working; 31.5 per cent to 69.6 per cent in metal working and 28.7 per cent to 69.1 per cent in power stations.<sup>67</sup> Just as soldiers had initially objected to having to share the trenches with women, many veterans now resented that many workplaces were dominated by women. This was something that Leningrad's male veterans would have to accept. Demographic structures had been so fundamentally disrupted, that women could not be pushed out of the workplace as quickly as occurred in other societies.<sup>68</sup>

The repopulation of Leningrad and the replenishment of its workforce was largely achieved by importing rural migrants to the city, something that many Leningraders suggested contributed to Leningrad's post-war provincialization. As Ruble writes; "Behind the neo-classical and baroque facades of the Moika and Fontanka came to live, not dispossessed gentry and honoured revolutionary heroes, but one more generation of peasants in workers' clothing."<sup>69</sup> According to a party official from the Kirov factory 75 to 85 per cent of the workforce in 1945 were completely new workers.<sup>70</sup> These were not the highly skilled workers that had been the pride of 'Red Petrograd' during the Revolution. Many of the new migrants had low levels of literacy. Combating adult illiteracy would become an area of great concern for both district

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<sup>65</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7480/1.59.

<sup>66</sup> Ezhov, 'Izmeneniia v chislennosti', p.19.

<sup>67</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.28.

<sup>68</sup> Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace*, p.147, 151, 189-90; Gerard J. DeGroot, *Blighty. British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London: Longman, 1996), pp.262-65; Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.179-85.

<sup>69</sup> Ruble, 'The Leningrad Affair', pp.301-20 (p.304).

<sup>70</sup> N. Sirev, 'Vosstanovlenie zavoda i praktika partiinogo kontroliia', *Propaganda i agitatsiia*, No.10 1945, p.41-45 (p.41).

soviets and the city soviet.<sup>71</sup> Many of these workers were also younger than veterans, coming from the generation that had escaped frontline service.<sup>72</sup> However, we should be careful not to exaggerate the impact new arrivals had. Waves of rural migration were nothing new in Leningrad. Indeed, many of the veterans returning to Leningrad were themselves former peasants who had migrated to the city in the 1930s.

Returning veterans could find it difficult to fit into these new collectives. Although propaganda stressed the language of families reunited when discussing veterans' re-employment, there was little continuity between pre-war and post-war workforces. Veterans now knew very few of their colleagues. Many ex-servicemen would have been acutely aware of the conspicuous absence of friends and colleagues who had either died at the front or during the blockade or who had been evacuated. The shift from tightly knit primary groups of men, to an environment in which women had gained increased presence and power could also be difficult. Making friends amongst newcomers was not easy for many ex-servicemen. Most preferred to stick together with fellow veterans with whom they felt they had something in common. Demobilization, then, could be disorientating even for those individuals who returned to established careers. While soldiers had been away serving their country a great deal had changed on the home front. For some it was galling how easily their fallen comrades had been replaced, and how production continued in their absence.

Workplace morale was much lower than propaganda suggested. In January 1946 L. Ganichev, *Pravda's* Leningrad correspondent, wrote to his editors with a list of infractions of labour discipline in the Krasnogvardeiskii and Volodarskii districts. The Bolshevik factory's workers came in for the most serious criticism. "In the workshops slackness and a decline in labour discipline reigns. Workers mooch about without purpose, often they return to the workshop after lunch in a state of intoxication." Elsewhere workers objected to working a ten hour day, expressed alleged 'anti-Soviet' ideas and even failed to arrive for work.<sup>73</sup> Having internalized the message that their duty was to become exemplary workers some veterans objected to the chaos and disorder they encountered when they restarted work. In April 1946 a dozen highly qualified veterans employed by Leningrad's tram and trolleybus administration wrote to

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<sup>71</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 31 January 1946, p.3; *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 3 October 1946, p.8. *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, 15 July 1947, p.4. TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7666/ll.17-20.

<sup>72</sup> Ezhov, 'Izmeneniia v chislennosti'.

<sup>73</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.88/ll.180-83.

*Leningradskaia pravda* complaining that they had spent three months waiting to start meaningful work. A lack of spare parts, tools and the attitude of management had frustrated their attempts to knuckle down to work.<sup>74</sup> In September 1946 Saisov, who had risen from the ranks to become a captain, complained about the lack of labour discipline where he worked. Having grown accustomed to strict military discipline he was infuriated by the tendency of fellow employees, particularly trainees, to arrive late for work, to be rude to senior staff and to demand regular smoking breaks.<sup>75</sup> Ex-servicemen who denounced their former colleagues were unlikely to make themselves popular with their colleagues.

Work very often failed to provide the kind of therapeutic space in which veterans could readjust to post-war normality. Working environments were confusing and disorientating. Veterans were not returning to the welcoming bosom of the factories, offices and farms they had left behind, as propaganda encouraged them to think. In many ways these places no longer existed. Not only were workplaces populated by different people, veterans themselves were very different people with different outlooks. The clock could not be turned back, no matter how much veterans or their government wished that it could.

### **The Mechanisms of Re-mobilisation**

Official statistics support the claim that returning veterans rapidly re-entered the civilian workplace. In mass demobilization's first months re-employment rates amongst veterans in both the city and oblast reflected initial successes. By 1 November 1945, approximately four months after the arrival of the first veterans, 71 per cent of veterans demobilized in the oblast and 71.5 per cent of veterans demobilized in Leningrad had been re-employed. In just four months the countryside found work for 11,335 veterans, and the city employment for 52,500 veterans. With the passing of time, as veterans settled down and officials gained experience, re-employment rates steadily improved. On 1 December 1946, a month later, 80.9 per cent of the city's demobilized soldiers, 95,842 out of a total of 118,500, had returned to work.<sup>76</sup> Further improvements were recorded in following months. 86 per cent of Leningrad's veterans had been re-

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<sup>74</sup> 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – Vynuzhdennoe bezdeistvie', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 8 April 1946, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – O distsipline na proizvodstve', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 29 September 1946, p.3.

<sup>76</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/1.23; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/2v/d.7188/1.5.

employed, amounting to 126,291 veterans out of a total of 148,000, by January 1946.<sup>77</sup> By the end of June 1947, the last set of available figures, it was calculated that 258,548 out of 267,253 demobilized approximately 96.7 per cent veterans were once again in civilian employment.<sup>78</sup> These figures suggest that Leningrad and its rural periphery were remarkably successful in finding employment for veterans. In mid March 1946 a Central Party Organisational-Instructional Department reported that 94 per cent of veterans had been re-employed. This compared favourably with a national average of 71.1 per cent.<sup>79</sup> As in Britain and America after 1945 there seems to have been no shortage of work for Leningrad's demobilized soldiers.

The official version of veterans' return to work was only part of the story. Official statistics related only to the rate at which soldiers demobilized in Leningrad found work. War invalids discharged from military hospitals during and after the war, former POWs released from filtration camps and veterans migrating to the region after demobilization elsewhere are not included in these figures. All three of these groups were probably less successful in finding employment than veterans demobilized straight from the army. No matter how impressive the percentage of former soldiers engaged in full-time employment a significant number of those arriving in the city and oblast found obtaining employment a challenge. Contrary to the propaganda myth Soviet society had not fully eradicated unemployment. In letters intercepted by the military censor veterans complained about the difficulty of finding employment. Many veterans were not seamlessly reintegrated into civil society. As one veteran explained in December 1946:

“Things in Leningrad are bad with work, there isn't work anywhere and I don't know what to devote myself to. All the second-hand things I had I've sold for nothing. Nobody pays the demobilized any attention. One only gets nonsense from the decrees and orders about benefits and the like.”<sup>80</sup>

Another veteran wrote to his family in early 1946: “It is hard to find suitable work. Yesterday I met a major, he has already been searching for work for a month. Wherever you go, in the majority of places, you hear the answer: “everything is already

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<sup>77</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.69.

<sup>78</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208.

<sup>79</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.145/l.193.

<sup>80</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.194.

occupied.”<sup>81</sup> In desperation A. Skorokhodov wrote to *Leningradskaia pravda* with a list of employers that had refused to employ him due to a lack of experience.

“Before the war I finished at ten-year school, enrolled at a university, from where I was taken into the army, I was demobilized with the rank of major, five years in the party. I am twenty-eight years old and I can’t find work for myself. I have a father and mother as dependents... Tell me, what I have to do? Where do I need to apply?”<sup>82</sup>

On the whole the reintegration of veterans into the civilian economy was impressive. Despite numerous obstacles the Soviet economy added approximately twelve million people to its workforce between 1944 and 1950.<sup>83</sup> Over twenty years ago Sheila Fitzpatrick argued that; “There was no systematic attempt to coordinate army demobilization, re-evacuation, and industrial recruitment of labour, though some enterprises took the initiative in trying to hire demobilized veterans.”<sup>84</sup> This was not the case in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast between mid 1945 and 1948, and particularly in the first eighteen months of demobilization. The rapid expansion in the civilian workforce was the product of extensive planning and the intervention of a number of state institutions, not just the actions of large employers or individuals’ responses to their own circumstances. Re-integrating veterans into the local workforce was taken very seriously. A number of administrative bodies prioritized *trudoustroistvo* for ex-service personnel. These included employers, trade-unions, local soviets, party committees, the Komsomol, military registration offices (*voenkomaty*) and Offices for the Calculation and Distribution of Labour Forces (*raspredbiuro*). Propaganda also communicated to officials the importance of facilitating veterans’ transition. The remobilization of veterans’ productive capacity was far from spontaneous. Veterans could not be left as isolated elements in Soviet society, whose minds had time to dwell on the past. They had to be made into productive citizens as quickly as possible.<sup>85</sup> Although planning to accommodate veterans was inadequate, local officials paid much closer attention to directing veterans towards work. This was typical of Stalinism, which

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<sup>81</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.82.

<sup>82</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7702/l.61.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher Burton, ‘The Labour Region in Late Stalinist Population Dynamics’, *Russian History*, Vol.36, No.1 (2009), pp.117-40 (p.134).

<sup>84</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘War and Society in Soviet Context: Soviet Labour before, during and after World War II’, *International Labour and Working Class History*, No. 35 (Spring 1989), pp.37-52.

<sup>85</sup> Burton, ‘The Labour Region in Late Stalinist Population Dynamics’, pp.117-40.

was always more successful in mobilizing populations than meeting material or consumer needs.

The task of re-mobilising former soldiers began almost as soon as they arrived in the city. Demobilization points were key locations for recruiting veterans. Industrial managers, factory directors and party factory committees were supposed to visit demobilization points regularly in order to meet potential employees. The Primorskii district demobilization point maintained a list of specialists required by local employers, but also organized an exhibition of the products manufactured by eight prominent local enterprises.<sup>86</sup> A number of Leningrad's major industrial plants employed recruiters as their permanent representatives at demobilization points in order to attract suitable candidates to their factories. Sharonov was employed by Elektrosila as a recruiter at a demobilization point to, "familiarize those arriving with the factory, its history and to tell those wishing to come to our factory about the professions we can train them in."<sup>87</sup> Recruiters were not always entirely scrupulous in their dealings with veterans. In March 1946 a group of ex-servicemen wrote a letter of collective complaint about Rog, the head engineer of Automobile Repair Factory No.61. In order to recruit veterans Rog had promised each future worker: firewood, shoes, work clothes, help in repairing apartments, high salaries and 150 kilograms of potatoes and vegetables each. Promises which neither he nor the factory could honour.<sup>88</sup>

The most important institutions in re-mobilizing veterans' labour were district offices for the Calculation and Distribution of Labour Resources (*raspredbiuro*), an organization subordinated to local soviets. *Raspredbiuro* were intended to function as a traditional labour exchange, acting as a middle man between veterans and potential employers. Like recruiters they maintained a presence at demobilization points. In theory *raspredbiuro* were to liaise with employers in their district, ascertain their labour requirements and then match individual veterans' skills and experience to specific vacancies. According to a Leningrad city *raspredbiuro* report written in October 1945 all veterans were supposed to be issued with work assignments (*nariady na raboty*) at

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<sup>86</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.388/1.35.

<sup>87</sup> 'Kak my vstrechaem demobilizovannykh', *Elektrosila*, 14 July 1945, p.1.

<sup>88</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.327/op.1/d.70/11.36-36ob.

demobilization points at the same time they were issued with passports, proof of military service, military registration cards and ration cards.<sup>89</sup>

The work of employing veterans was closely monitored by district military registration offices (*Voenkromaty*), and reported to local party committees. These bodies routinely produced detailed reports documenting the number of veterans in and out of employment, the type of work they had obtained, which factories and organisation were re-employing veterans in large numbers, training initiatives and unfortunate failures in the demobilization system. The Leningrad city *Voenkromat* collated this information and compiled regular statistical reports capturing the number of soldiers demobilized in the city, and the percentage re-employed.<sup>90</sup> This created a situation typical of Soviet administration. A party institution was tasked with monitoring the actions of a bureaucracy controlled by local soviets. This created administrative duplication but ensured that the actions of any one organization were supervised and counter-balanced by a potential competitor.

In practice veterans had greater control over their choice of employment. Formal work allocation mechanisms, just as with housing distribution, competed against informal practices. According to national data, cited by Mark Edele, between November 1945 and November 1946 the majority of veterans, rising from fifty-one to sixty-one per cent during this period, did not use state infrastructure to find work, preferring to use their own initiative.<sup>91</sup> Many of Leningrad's veterans contacted their former employers and made arrangements to return to their pre-war positions wholly independent of state work allocation mechanisms. Others exploited personal contacts. The factory committee of one optical factory reported that between January and June 1946 it recruited half of its workers from demobilization points, but it also encouraged existing employees to recommend friends and relatives. Of 707 new employees 219, approximately thirty per cent, were ex-servicemen.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the rhetoric of Soviet economic planning market mechanisms played a role in recruiting veterans. When N. Maiorov was demobilized in August 1945 he found

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<sup>89</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.2.

<sup>90</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201.

<sup>91</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.55-56.

<sup>92</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7758/l.43.



announcements inviting the demobilized to work in factories and enterprises wherever he looked.<sup>93</sup> Throughout December 1945 and January 1946 the back pages of the newly established *Vechernii Leningrad* published a raft of advertisements offering veterans employment. The building administration *Narkomstroï* advertised for a wide range of professions and trades including; engineers and building technicians, tractor, lorry and excavator drivers, metalworkers and pneumatic drill operators.<sup>94</sup> A garment factory advertised for tailors, sewing machine operators, assistant workers and offered disabled veterans training.<sup>95</sup> Another construction trust advertised for: carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, stove-fitters, roofers, plasterers, painters, decorators, glaziers, plumbers, metal-workers, electricians, electro-welders, concrete workers, blacksmiths and general fitters. Other advertisements sought experienced engineers for the city's gasification project, demobilized sailors to work on ships, metalworkers for factories, and machine operators in a knitted-goods factory.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, there was great demand, and some competition, for veterans' labour particularly in the reconstruction and building trades.

Despite the existence of informal mechanisms *raspredbiuro* and *voenkomaty* played an important role in mobilizing veterans in the Leningrad region. From the start of mass demobilization Leningrad's officials were anxious about veterans' *trudoustroistvo*. Moscow, by way of comparison, had a more relaxed attitude to re-employment. In July 1945 a conference of Moscow's district party and soviet chairmen declared that employment was not prompting any complications or concern, "as the people are still assessing the situation before acting, are choosing where best to go, not knowing what would be best, and the choice is unlimited."<sup>97</sup> Leningrad's officials were more forceful in directing veterans towards employment, having anticipated a more rapid re-mobilization of veterans than that envisaged by demobilization legislation. Decisions about remobilising labour were not made in the interests of individual veterans, but rather the state's objective of a rapid economic recovery.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> 'Zasuchit' rukava, da rabotat', rabotat', *Elektrosila*, 12 November 1945, p.1.

<sup>94</sup> *Vechernii Leningrad*, 17, 20 and 22 December 1945, p.3 and 3 January 1946, p.4.

<sup>95</sup> *Vechernii Leningrad*, 17 and 22 December 1945, p.4.

<sup>96</sup> *Vechernii Leningrad*, 2 January 1946, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> M.M. Gorinov, et. al. (ed.), *Moskva poslevoennaia, 1945-1947: arkhivnye dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Mosgorarkhiv, 2000), p.299.

<sup>98</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.16.

Veterans found that their freedom to choose employment was constrained by official policy, and the determination of the local party-state to direct veterans towards key economic sectors. Veterans' labour was envisaged as a key resource in reconstruction and economic recovery. In December 1945 the Executive Committee of the Oblast Party drew up plans for remobilizing veterans as quickly as possible. The document included a list of the oblast's key industrial enterprises, and the number of veterans district *raspredbiuro* were to direct to each workplace. There were 8905 positions in total, in raw material production and industries linked to reconstruction, including: brick factories, sawmills, forestry, turf cutting enterprises and railway reconstruction gangs. The largest single employers were the Boksitogorskii mine (600 workers) and the Pikalevo cement factory (500 workers) in the Tikhvinskii district, the Volkhovskii aluminium factory (600 workers) in Volkhov, the Svirskaiia power station project (400 workers) in the Podporozhskii district, and the Naziia turf cutting enterprise (350 workers) in the Mginskii district. Positions for skilled workers and managers, which propaganda linked with veterans, were only a tiny fraction of these positions. Veterans who had worked in agriculture prior to mobilization were to return to *kolkhozy* or *sovkhozy*, while former tractor drivers and soldiers with experience driving military vehicles were to be directed towards employment at machine and tractor stations.<sup>99</sup> In Volkhov, Vyborg and the Mginskii district Komsomol cells compiled lists of vacancies suitable for returning veterans.<sup>100</sup>

In Leningrad a similar list of industries and infrastructure projects towards which veterans and re-evacuees were to be directed was drawn up in December 1945. The tram and trolleybus administration was to employ 4500 workers, over half of the projected vacancies, to repair Leningrad's transport network.<sup>101</sup> City Party Committee reports confirm the intention to remobilise veterans for reconstruction work, the project to provide gas to homes and workplaces, the reconstruction of tramlines and as workers in major industrial enterprises.<sup>102</sup> On 30 May 1945 the city party committee passed a resolution, which made formal provision for workers to be redirected towards

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<sup>99</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.111/l.61-64.

<sup>100</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.5/d.232/l.16; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-5989/op.5/d.238/l.117; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.11/d.322/l.42.

<sup>101</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.24.

<sup>102</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.56.

employment in reconstruction work.<sup>103</sup> Official reports stressed that large numbers of veterans found work in the industrial sector, on building sites and on infrastructure projects. Between 17 October and 8 December 1945 the Dzerzhinskii district employed 436 veterans in the city's gasification project.<sup>104</sup> In November 1945 the Smol'ninskii district reemployed 568 demobilized soldiers in the *Gazoapparat* and *Gazosetsroi*, work gangs linked to the project.<sup>105</sup>

Leningrad's largest industrial employers played a significant role in providing work, but often to former employees. By January 1946, according to one historian, approximately sixty per cent, 88,000 in total, of Leningrad's veterans had been re-employed in industrial enterprises.<sup>106</sup> Gigantic industrial enterprises such as these were well placed to assimilate returning veterans. Yet major employers welcomed home only a fraction of the number of workers mobilized to fight. 1085 soldiers had been demobilized in Kolpino by the end of 1945. The town's largest employer the Izhorskii defence industry works employed 869 of these.<sup>107</sup> In January 1946, to put this into perspective in January 1946, veterans were approximately eleven per cent of a workforce totalling 7694.<sup>108</sup>

At the end of December 1945 a Leningrad procuracy report monitoring the implementation of demobilization legislation noted that the Kirov factory had hired around a thousand demobilized veterans, the majority of whom were former employees hired as skilled tradesmen or in an administrative capacity. 139 veterans found work at factory Number 678, an electrical production enterprise. 108 were previous employees with high qualifications. All of these were using their pre-war skills and trades. Six had been hired in a managerial capacity and forty as engineers or technicians.<sup>109</sup> By the end of 1945 the Bolshevik factory had employed 641 demobilized soldiers.<sup>110</sup> The Stalin

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<sup>103</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.16.

<sup>104</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.125.

<sup>105</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.89.

<sup>106</sup> Ezhov, 'Izmeneniia v chislennosti', p.19. For similar figures see GARF/f.8131/op.37/d.3175/l.224.

<sup>107</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.138-39.

<sup>108</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7753/l.39ob.

<sup>109</sup> GARF/f.R-8131/op.37/d.3175/l.218.

<sup>110</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.14.

Steel factory employed 660 veterans: 516 of them in skilled positions.<sup>111</sup> Fifty-four per cent of workers taking jobs at Elektrosila in 1946 were demobilized pre-war employees.<sup>112</sup> Veterans were still a minority in the post-war workforce, despite their rapid influx into the region. The large number of veterans employed in Leningrad's gigantic industrial plants has sometimes been taken as proof of high skills levels amongst veterans. Some historians have mistaken the large numbers of veterans employed by major industrial enterprises as evidence of their privileged position in the labour market. However, this was a reflection of the nature of the local economy, rather than an indication of veterans' desire to become exemplary industrial workers.

The mechanisms developed to reintegrate veterans into the workforce prioritized the needs of the party-state, rather than the individual veteran's interests. What administrators, and subsequently historians, seized on as the success of demobilization, namely the rapid remobilization of large numbers of returning troops, was achieved by infringing upon veterans' legal entitlements. Demobilization legislation theoretically guaranteed veterans employment matching their skills and experience in positions no lower than their pre-war jobs. But in order to achieve a rapid remobilization of veterans and to direct them towards reconstruction work or employment in industries prioritized in the post-war Five Year Plan officials frequently ignored previous qualifications and skills. Throughout 1945 and 1946 the editors of *Leningradskaia pravda* received many letters from returning troops complaining that they were unable to find work matching their skills.<sup>113</sup> Before the war P.Krugliakov, for example, had worked as a metal-worker at the Izhorskii factory in Kolpino. Following demobilization in January 1946 he was re-employed in a different factory, with a position and salary five rungs lower on the pay scale.<sup>114</sup> The disparity between pre-war and post-war occupations was often more striking. Two veterans, one a cobbler the other an artist, were sent to work at a tram depot.<sup>115</sup> In November 1945 a holder of the prestigious Order of the Red Star complained the Volodarskii district demobilization point had been unable to find him work in his previous career. A week after demobilization he was sent to work as an unskilled labourer for *Lengazstroï* on the gasification project. His letter of complaint,

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<sup>111</sup> Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction*, p.19.

<sup>112</sup> Ezhov, 'Izmeneniia v chislennosti', pp.15-21.

<sup>113</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7702/ll.23-24; TsGA-SPb/f.327/op.1/d.49/ll.20-23.

<sup>114</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7702/l.51.

<sup>115</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.90.

addressed to the chairman of the Leningrad soviet, questioned whether demobilization legislation had ever been circulated in the Volodarskii district.<sup>116</sup> These problems were not unique. The under-utilization of workers' skills affected all sections of the population not just veterans. In April 1945 a party *orgburo* report bemoaned that work assignments were issued without consideration of pre-war trades and skills.<sup>117</sup> Yet for soldiers with valuable skills, and expectations of privileged treatment, having to accept menial or unskilled work was especially insulting. As one veteran complained:

“Is it fair? We return from the army, our native factories wait for us, and make requests for our labour, the *raivoenkomat* shelves these. And here we are, defenders of the motherland, but we have to go like little boys to learn new professions and to live half-starving without anything to wear.”<sup>118</sup>

The timeframe for resuming work highlighted another important tension between the official narrative of demobilization, and the reality experienced by veterans. In Leningrad many veterans were forced back into employment sooner than they had envisaged. Locally issued work assignments required veterans to start new jobs within five days of demobilization. In the Leningrad oblast a rest period of ten days was permitted.<sup>119</sup> *Raspredbiuro* directives dictated that ration cards were not to be issued to those who had not accepted work assignments. Those who did were given rations for a further five days, and received a permanent ration card only when they committed to a workplace.<sup>120</sup>

According to a report dated 13 October 1945 written by Trakachev, the head of the Leningrad city *voenkomat*, demobilization points' work was complicated by the fact that many military units incorrectly explained demobilization legislation to soldiers. “All demobilized (troops) say that they were told in their units that they would receive a month's furlough, and after that they themselves could choose what kind of work they wanted.”<sup>121</sup> This perceived ‘misunderstanding’ of the legislation was widespread. Despite the repeated description in the press of workers returning to work immediately

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<sup>116</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.327/op.1/d.49/l.31-31ob.

<sup>117</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.386/l.16-17ob.

<sup>118</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7702/l.10; Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, pp.16-17.

<sup>119</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.39; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.61.

<sup>120</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.2.

<sup>121</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.40.

after their homecoming, many ex-servicemen continued to demand that the law entitled them to a thirty day rest period.<sup>122</sup> Trakachev continued;

“Having encountered this situation some demobilized soldiers declare that nobody had the right to send them to work right now as they had been granted a month’s leave, that demobilization law was being broken, and that they would write to comrade Stalin about this arbitrariness and so on.”<sup>123</sup>

Falin, Leningrad’s chief prosecutor, reported instances when returning soldiers refused to work. This insistence on a period of rest was repeated across the Soviet Union.<sup>124</sup> For soldiers who had served for four years, longer for those who had served in the Finnish War, a month’s rest hardly seemed extravagant. This heavy handedness generated enormous resentment.

The link between employment and the allocation of ration cards introduced an element of compulsion. Control of ration cards was intended to allow *raspredbiuro* to pressurise veterans back into civilian employment, even when they physically and mentally needed time to recuperate. Perversely the link between employment and ration-cards, in certain circumstances, could prove a barrier to veterans’ reemployment. Veterans’ attempts to find employment on their own initiative were often thwarted by a shortage of ration cards. Workplaces had a limited quota of ration cards. Once the limit was reached they were prevented from hiring further workers.<sup>125</sup> This proved to be a particular problem in the autumn and winter of 1946, when the number of ration cards issued to the population was restricted. During these months many enterprises were forced to turn away prospective employees. In October 1946, for example, Leningrad’s Sverdlov machine tool factory refused fifteen demobilized veterans, all former employees of the factory with between five and fifteen years’ experience, work because of the ration card shortage.<sup>126</sup> A letter sent from Leningrad to a serving soldier in November 1946, presumably between comrades, painted a bleak prospect of finding work.

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<sup>122</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.67.

<sup>123</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.40.

<sup>124</sup> A. Falin, ‘Okhranit’ prava demobilizovannykh’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 14 October 1945, p.2; RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.145/l.194.

<sup>125</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.187/l.168.

<sup>126</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.691/l.169.

“I am not working at present, I was laid off, and many manufacturers are reducing their staff. They are not giving out ration cards... A second blockade has begun and they aren’t hiring new workers, because everywhere a reduction (in staff) is ongoing. Well I don’t know what is best to advise you when you leave the army. Perhaps you can still stay and gossip in the army, or arrange to come home to Leningrad and die from the cold.”<sup>127</sup>

Veterans who encountered these difficulties were inevitably disappointed and became disenchanted. Hopes and expectations of privilege and a special place in post-war society quickly evaporated. As a veteran wrote in December 1946:

“I have been demobilized. I have been kicking my heels for two months in order to find work, but they don’t give out ration cards. You can enter work, but you have to live on just holy-spirit. There is no kind of concern for demobilized (troops). Just try and live, I am surviving by selling my last rags.”<sup>128</sup>

The mechanisms established to ease veterans’ transition were not the model of efficiency that propaganda suggested. Failures in working practices were serious and widespread. *Raspredbiuro* were responsible for arranging employment for re-evacuees as well as veterans. Consequently, many district offices were unable to cope with the volume of work. Administrators were under great pressure and working in highly stressful environments. In 1944 and early 1945 Nina Mantula, head of the Chuibushev district *raspredbiuro*, had just two employees. Their workload was enormous even before demobilization began.<sup>129</sup> In several districts extremely inexperienced members of staff, including assistants and support workers, were placed in charge of remobilizing *frontoviki*. During the inspection of a demobilization point in Leningrad’s Sverdlovskii raion a teenage girl, a former manual labourer, was discovered to be in charge of labour allocation.<sup>130</sup> Work at demobilization points was neither prestigious nor pleasant. It often involved communicating disappointing news to aggressive and traumatized *frontoviki*. Perhaps the employment of a young girl was a deliberate ploy to disarm the angry reactions of veterans aggrieved to find just how dramatically the reality of re-employment differed from the propaganda image.

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<sup>127</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.26/d.187/l.147.

<sup>128</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36.d.187/l.195.

<sup>129</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.10/d.745/l.11ob.

<sup>130</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.39.

Given staffing shortages and the pressure of work it was understandable that officials were abrupt or even callous in their attitude towards veterans. *Frontoviki* reacted to the administrators controlling re-employment with the same animosity directed at housing officials. Veterans who sought work with their pre-war employers, only to be told that they could not offer them anything, as Aleksei Gonchukov found at the Kirov works, were understandably angry.<sup>131</sup> Others were aggrieved by the behaviour of paper-pushing ‘desk rats’, who seemed to care little for veterans’ predicaments. One veteran wrote to a friend in Kiev about his experience at the district *Raspredbiuro* office:

“Well there sit such loathsome little people, they don’t have a single drop of humanity, it’s all facts with them - this and that piece of paper... Oh, I’m tired with all this bureaucracy these formalities and stuffy paperwork... nearly everybody has lost their conscience.”<sup>132</sup>

Other veterans, such as G.I. Dorokhin, complained about perceived corruption in the distribution of work assignments. In February 1946 he wrote that:

“Leningrad as a city, like all other cities has its bad side, in order to get a job one needs a lot of acquaintances or so-called pull (*blat*) or a colossal quantity of money... If you don’t have money and many acquaintances then they won’t send you to work in a profession but to work on seasonal employment.”<sup>133</sup>

Seasonal employment was a euphemism for unpopular, low-paid and back breaking jobs in construction, agriculture and forestry.<sup>134</sup> Failures in working practices, allegations of corruption and the resentments they generated may well have contributed to the decision, taken in mid October 1946, to dismantle the *raspredbiuro* network.<sup>135</sup>

### **One Myth – Many Realities. Veterans’ Varied Experiences of Re-employment**

Leningrad’s veterans were not just industrial workers or construction workers. 15,753 veterans had passed through the demobilization point in Leningrad’s Smol’ninskii district demobilization point by the end of December 1945. Amongst them were 3278 metal workers, 925 builders, 2175 drivers, 194 textile workers, 203

<sup>131</sup> TSGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.333/l.159.

<sup>132</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.81.

<sup>133</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.78.

<sup>134</sup> On the attitude of veterans attitudes towards Leningrad’s demobilization officials see Dale, ‘Rats and Resentment’, pp.113-33.

<sup>135</sup> *Biulleten’ Lengorispolkoma*, 30 October 1946, p.4.



woodworkers, 70 printers, 270 tailors, 372 shoemakers, 356 students, 283 nurses, 595 labourers, 802 traders, 593 electricians and 3067 accounts clerks.<sup>136</sup> *Raspredbiuro* and *Voenkomaty* were made responsible for recruiting 2000 demobilized soldiers and re-evacuees to work as policemen by 1 December 1945. In November 1946 another party decision recommended that the police recruit 1100 demobilized junior officers.<sup>137</sup> Other veterans returned to work in professions such as teaching, journalism or medicine. Between April 1945 and April 1946 sixty-one lawyers, returned from the armed forces and resumed practice in Leningrad.<sup>138</sup> In November 1945 *Smena*, the Komsomol newspaper, reported that a number of demobilized soldiers were resuming careers as professional sportsmen.<sup>139</sup> Veterans even found work in those administrative positions, such as district housing administrations and *raspredbiuro*, which their former comrades found so disagreeable.<sup>140</sup>

While the state insisted on directing veterans towards jobs in heavy industry and other key economic sectors many veterans had very different ideas about what constituted desirable employment. Of course many welcomed a return to their former workplaces, and an opportunity to practice familiar skills. Yet, as a number of party reports made clear, many former soldiers were not interested in returning to humdrum jobs. What constituted a good job was a highly personal matter. It depended on a host of factors: pay, distance from home, the nature of the work and the people with whom they were working. For the majority of veterans labouring jobs on construction sites were extremely unpopular. Pay rates and working conditions in construction were extremely poor, and the work was backbreaking.<sup>141</sup> Two hundred and fifty ex-servicemen released from the army in 1943 because of their injuries were mobilized into a construction gang. They couldn't wait to get out of this job. They were still petitioning the Ispolkom of the Leningrad oblast soviet to be released in May 1946, arguing that had they still been

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<sup>136</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12.d.346/l.88.

<sup>137</sup> M.E. Zharkoi, *Militsiia Leningrada v mekhanizme realizatsii karatel'noi politiki poselvoennykh let (1945-1957 gg.) Istoricheskie uroki deiatel'nosti* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Politekhnikheski universiteta, 2004), p.54.

<sup>138</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3672/op.1/d.6/l.4.

<sup>139</sup> 'Vozvrashchenie k sporty. Demobilizovennye iz armii sportsmen vozobnovliaiut prezhnogo raboty', *Smena*, 22 November 1945, p.2.

<sup>140</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.327/op.1/d.70/l.48.

<sup>141</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.386/l.46-52.

serving they would have been demobilized long ago.<sup>142</sup> Between March and April 1946 the Supreme Soviet received over 2500 petitions from former Soviet POWs pleading to be released from quasi labour armies.<sup>143</sup> Work on Leningrad's construction sites would almost certainly have brought veterans into contact with German POWs. There is also evidence that a small number of German POWs were working at both the Kirov and Elektrosila plants up to at least 1947.<sup>144</sup> Quiet what victors thought of being forced to work alongside the former enemy is unclear, but it almost certainly reinforced their impression that demobilization had dealt them a bad hand.

Rather than grumbling about the inequalities of employment allocation other veterans actively sought positions that would free them from production line drudgery or exhausting manual labour. As a Leningrad party report forwarded to Moscow at the end of July 1945 observed many veterans expressed a desire to work in food processing plants, in milk and meat production, in the trade network or in canteens. The Moscow district reception point directed 170 veterans to work at a meat processing plant, perhaps the closest thing to an ideal job.<sup>145</sup> Veterans returning to the Frunzenskii district were no doubt pleased to learn that the Krupskaia chocolate factory and the district food trading administration were amongst the workplaces towards which veterans were being directed.<sup>146</sup> These kinds of work were popular because they allowed veterans to divert food, perhaps the most valuable commodity in Leningrad especially given its recent history, from official distribution. What veterans and their families did not consume themselves could be sold on the black market.<sup>147</sup> Jobs in canteens, cafés, bars and breweries serving, distributing or producing alcohol were highly coveted. The sums changing hands for employment in such positions were astronomical; the position of a vendor selling beer cost approximately 15,000 roubles or the head of a bar 30,000 roubles, many times the annual salaries paid to skilled industrial workers.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> GARF/f.5446/op.48/d.3063/l.1.

<sup>143</sup> GARF/f.7523/op.55/d.10/l.17.

<sup>144</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.1788/op.27/d.440/l.1, 6.

<sup>145</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.471/l.98.

<sup>146</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.246/l.177.

<sup>147</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.64.

<sup>148</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i borba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.151.

Many veterans strove to become drivers in distribution organizations or transport pools. This allowed them to continue using a skill developed in the military, from which men often derive personal satisfaction, while additional income could be earned from transporting people and their property, or trading in what ‘fell off the back of the lorry’.<sup>149</sup> A report investigating the progress of demobilization in the Leningrad oblast dated 15 December 1945 expressed concern that veterans’ enthusiasm for these forms of work were damaging the interests of important industrial enterprises and construction sites. In the Efimovskii district over 300 unemployed veterans were trying to secure work in supply bases and warehouses, despite a severe labour shortage in the forestry industry. In other districts former *kolkhozniki* and *sovkhhozniki* attempted to find work in warehouses or in administrative capacities, rather than in agriculture.<sup>150</sup>

Some veterans hoped to begin new lives after a war which had transformed their entire world. This was a war that plucked men and women everywhere from obscure workaday jobs to perform interesting, exciting and dangerous jobs in often unfamiliar or exotic places; after it, many were reluctant to return to safer, smaller and duller civilian lives.<sup>151</sup> In the Soviet Union, as in Europe and the USA, the state attempted to make veterans’ choices for them, but many veterans attempted to make a fresh start. By the end of 1945, for example, 81 of Leningrad’s demobilized veterans and 44 war invalids had enrolled in the theatrical institute, no doubt hoping to begin a stage career.<sup>152</sup> Others made more radical changes in their lifestyle. In 1939 L. Poliakov graduated from Leningrad’s medical institute. For the next ten years he served as a doctor in the Soviet Army. During the war he found religion. In 1949, after his demobilization, he became a priest at the Preobrazhenskii church, close to Litenyi Prospect.<sup>153</sup> In the village of Sablino, close to Tosno, a disabled veteran who had previously worked as a railway telegraphist made a living selling milk from his privately owned cow, and by conducting religious services, particularly christenings and funeral services, in people’s homes.<sup>154</sup> Such evidence challenges Weiner’s assertion that a wartime religious revival

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<sup>149</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.65.

<sup>150</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.59.

<sup>151</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, pp.141-49.

<sup>152</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.126.

<sup>153</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.132/d.569/l.198.

<sup>154</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7027/l.179.

did not penetrate the Red Army.<sup>155</sup> The end of the war, then, permitted some veterans, although perhaps fewer than in other societies, the opportunity to reinvent themselves and their lives.

### Younger Veterans and Students

Reintegrating into the civilian workforce was hardest for inexperienced and impressionable young veterans born between 1923 and 1927, the so called ‘frontline generation’.<sup>156</sup> The war’s psychological impact was deepest and longest lasting on these birth-cohorts; young men and women with little peacetime life experience. The frontline generation, as Edele writes, often enjoyed elevated military careers which, “did not give them adequate civilian competencies, and therefore demobilization often meant a step back in life-cycle stage and social standing, at least initially.”<sup>157</sup> Veterans that had joined the army straight from the school bench, without any pre-war trade, profession or experience found obtaining work particularly difficult. Since the Red Army’s demobilization was organized by age group the youngest birth cohorts were demobilized once the best employment opportunities had already been taken by their older comrades. Conscripts born in 1926 were not demobilized until 1950; those born in 1927 not until 1951. By the time these young men were discharged from the army much of the program of entitlements had been dismantled. There was little or no support for these veterans. A veteran demobilized in 1950, interviewed as part of my research, laughed at my questions about the training opportunities for veterans. Such a thought was ridiculous. After a moment’s thought he replied that the only real preparation he had for the workplace was the few months he spent working as plumber in Leningrad during the winter of 1941-1942, aged just fifteen or sixteen.<sup>158</sup>

Not all veterans were forced to find work. Many used demobilization as an opportunity to resume an interrupted education or to enter higher or technical education for the first time. The enthusiasm of some veterans for an opportunity to gain further

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<sup>155</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.312. On the attractions of religion for veterans see Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.65-70.

<sup>156</sup> Seniavskaia, *Frontovoe pokolenie*, pp.35-36.

<sup>157</sup> Edele, ‘Soviet Veterans As Entitlement Group’, p.113.

<sup>158</sup> Interview, 21 March 2008, Disc No.10.

qualifications was remarkable.<sup>159</sup> For many a familiarity with military technology fostered an interest in science and engineering and a desire to develop this interest. In theory veterans enjoyed privileged access to education, including preferential admissions, exemptions from tuition payments, assistance in sitting entrance examinations and even additional maintenance grants.<sup>160</sup> This reinforced the general framework of reconstruction and economic growth. Ex-servicemen attempting to enrol on courses at engineering, industrial construction, machine-building or railway engineering institutes were given additional support in preparing for entrance exams.<sup>161</sup> However, the total number of veterans was small. According to City *raspredbiuro* statistics 7210 veterans had enrolled in education institutions by the end of June 1946, approximately four per cent of the total demobilized.<sup>162</sup> Soviet educational privileges were not the engine of social mobility created by the American G.I. Bill. Fifty-one per cent of American World War II veterans, almost eight million in total, took advantage of the G.I. Bill's education and training provisions. By 1947 veterans accounted for forty-nine per cent of students in American colleges.<sup>163</sup> In comparison in 1947 veterans constituted seventeen per cent of students in Soviet universities, and just one per cent of veterans were students.<sup>164</sup>

Not all former soldiers chose courses consistent with the state's economic goals. *Frontoviki* resuming or commencing their studies at Leningrad State University were spread across all departments; from physics and mathematics, biology and geography, and philology and history.<sup>165</sup> Despite suggestions that veterans were beneficiaries of affirmative action, something often resented by their fellow students, many veterans proved themselves to be leading students and eventually began academic careers.<sup>166</sup> The number of veterans reported to be achieving top grades and winning additional grants in

<sup>159</sup> Mikhailov, *Na dne blokady i voyny*, pp.445-48; Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.34. Also interview 29 February 2008, Disc No. 6.

<sup>160</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.133.

<sup>161</sup> 'Pomoshch' demobilizovannym pri postuplenii v vuzy', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 23 March 1946, p.1; 'Pered priemom v vuzy i tekhnikumy', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 26 May 1946, p.1.

<sup>162</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.110.

<sup>163</sup> Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*, pp.7-8; Allport, *Demobbed*, pp.157-58.

<sup>164</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.134.

<sup>165</sup> A.F. Berezhnoi (et. al.), *Leningradskii universitet v Velikoi Otechestvennoi. Ocherki* (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1990), pp.288-95.

<sup>166</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.133-35.

part reflected the propaganda that they should study as they had fought in battle.<sup>167</sup>

*Leningradskii universitet*, the university newspaper, regularly carried reports about exemplary ex-servicemen's achievements.<sup>168</sup> This was not entirely propaganda rhetoric. Many veterans were highly talented. Ivan Kotov, for example, a Hero of the Soviet Union celebrated in one article, would go on to teach economics and have a prestigious academic career.<sup>169</sup> However, veterans were given much greater attention than their peers and in subsequent years they became the subject of almost hagiographical study.<sup>170</sup>

Despite being in a minority veterans came to dominate local university structures. They gained a virtual monopoly of positions in university Komsomol cells, dominated university committees and controlled student societies.<sup>171</sup> This 'mafia-like' dominance did not always endear ex-servicemen to their fellow students, who felt poor relations compared to the men upon whom praise, attention and material support were lavished.<sup>172</sup> Other students, many of whom had lived through the blockade, resented ex-servicemen returning and throwing their weight around. Likewise veterans often felt that they had little in common with students who had escaped the frontlines, by virtue of being born just a few years later. Feeling estranged from their peers, ex-servicemen tended to stick together, preferring the company of fellow members of the frontline brotherhood to civilians. The mutual animosity between *frontoviki* and younger students aggravated an already difficult transition. Adapting to the slower pace of life in the classroom after the drama of army life was always going to be difficult. The routines of

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<sup>167</sup> 'V uchenii kak v boiu', *Leningradskii universitet*, 31 August 1946, p.1; 'Vnov' v rodnom universitete', *Leningradskii universitet*, 28 August, 1945, p.2; 'Student Orlov v dni voyny i v dni mira', *Leningradskii universitet*, 28 January 1946, p.1.

<sup>168</sup> 'Oni zashchishchali rodiny', *Leningradskii universitet*, 23 February 1946, p.1; 'Otvazhnye voin student –otlichnik', *Leningradskii universitet*, 7 November 1946, p.3; 'Sovetskii molodoi chelovek', *Leningradskii universitet*, 12 May 1948, p.4.

<sup>169</sup> 'Ludi nashego universiteta. Student Ivan Kotov, Geroi Sovetskogo soiuza', *Leningradskii universitet*, 28 September 1946, p.4; Berezhnoi (et. al.), *Leningradskii universitet*, p.293.

<sup>170</sup> See for example the portraits of University alumni and veteran students in A.F. Berezhnoi, *Oni srazhalis' za Rodiny. Universanty v gody voyny i v poslevonnye gody. Dokumental'nye ocherki* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1995).

<sup>171</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.135. 'Komsomol'tsy universiteta v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny', *Leningradskii universitet*, 12 October 1946, pp.2-3. For examples see 'Molodoi Kommunist Maslov', *Leningradskii universitet*, 18 May 1946, p.2; 'Partorg Vasilii Grigorovskii', *Leningradskii universitet*, 23 April 1947, p.2; 'Druzhnaia Gruppy', *Leningradskii universitet*, 30 June 1948, p.4.

<sup>172</sup> On additional support for veterans see 'Zabota o voinakh Krasnoi Armii', *Leningradskii universiteta*, 23 February 1946, p.1; 'Zabota o byvshikh voinakh', *Leningradskii universiteta*, 22 February 1947, p.1.

university life were about as far removed from army life as was possible. A cartoon published in *Krokodil* alluded to the difficulties of adjustment. Two young men, one in uniform both wearing medal ribbons were pictured, surrounded by their fellow students, sitting drinking tea and reading textbooks. One observes to the other the absurdity of their situation: “Kolia, you and I took Warsaw, and then Berlin... and now here we are taking geology, mineralogy and chemistry...”<sup>173</sup> For all that, some made the transition with surprising ease; a testimony to the esteem in which they held education. For them, the shift from war’s physical challenges to a more cerebral life was embraced with enthusiasm.

### Female Veterans

By the end of May 1947 a total of 265,192 veterans had been demobilized in Leningrad and its suburbs. Of these 29,780, approximately eleven per cent, were women.<sup>174</sup> Women’s experience of demobilization was often very different from that of their male comrades. Most women veterans arrived in Leningrad in a concentrated burst during the first six months of demobilization. 93.8 per cent of women veterans, 27,935 in total, were demobilized by the end of December 1945.<sup>175</sup> In the first five months of 1947, according to Leningrad *voenkomat* figures, just two women were demobilized.<sup>176</sup> Subsequently monthly reports stopped analyzing the gender breakdown of veterans.<sup>177</sup>

Reintegrating female veterans into the workforce presented specific challenges, as Kalinin acknowledged to a meeting of female soldiers on 26 July 1945. It was one thing to demobilize a *kolkhoznik* who already had a purpose, home and family to return to, and another to reintegrate a twenty-three year old woman, whose only work experience was at the front, and had gained her independence during the war. Yet Kalinin expressed confidence that ninety-nine per cent of women veterans would have no difficulty fitting back into civilian society. After all they were the physically and mentally toughest, as well as most politically conscious, examples of Soviet

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<sup>173</sup> *Krokodil*, 30 January 1946, p.21.

<sup>174</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.136.

<sup>175</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.3.

<sup>176</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.48,54,71,116,136.

<sup>177</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208,201.

womanhood.<sup>178</sup> The small minority who might experience difficulties could rely upon the assistance of the Komsomol, which would do everything possible to assist girl soldiers' (*devushki-voiny*) transitions.<sup>179</sup>

This was a responsibility that local Komsomol organizations took seriously. Across the Leningrad oblast Komsomol organizations directed over 600 female veterans to work in village readings huts, as nurses, as radio operators and accounts clerks.<sup>180</sup> By November 1945 215 female veterans were given administrative or leadership roles within local Komsomol cells.<sup>181</sup> However, the majority of female veterans appear to have been directed back towards gender appropriate employment. It was recommended that those female veterans demobilized from the Leningrad front in 1944 either returned to the land, or were given training in cooking, sewing or clerical work.<sup>182</sup> A large number of women found work in traditionally female jobs, such as machine operators in Leningrad's textile factories.<sup>183</sup> Many women, like their male counterparts, were unable to find civilian work that reflected the highly specialized and prestigious work they had undertaken during the war. Few Soviet airwomen, for example, were able to continue flying in either military or civilian aviation. Many would end up in low status and poorly paid jobs linked to aviation, or in other very different roles.<sup>184</sup>

The experience of Leningrad's women veterans challenges Edele's assertion that the problems faced by female *frontoviki*, "were related to marriage chances, family life, and the politics of sexual morality rather than to employment and career."<sup>185</sup> A. Sokolova, for example, was demobilized from the Red Army in 1945. At the beginning of the war, aged just eighteen, she volunteered for the front, leaving behind her work as a shop-assistant. In four years of armed service she was wounded twice, received a

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<sup>178</sup> RGASPI/f.88/op.1/d.1055/11.1-6.

<sup>179</sup> RGASPI/f.78/op.1/d.1055/1.5.

<sup>180</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.5/d.232/1.16; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-5989/op.5/d.238/1.117; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.11/d.322/1.42.

<sup>181</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.K-598/op.6/d.113/11.149-149ob; 'Okruzhim zabotoi nashie slavykh voynov', *Smena*, 2 September 1945, p.1.

<sup>182</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53a/d.90/1.59.

<sup>183</sup> 'Novye kadry trebuiut zaboty i vnimaniia', *Krasnoe Znamia*, 13 September 1945, p.1.

<sup>184</sup> Reina Pennington, *Wings, Women and War. Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat* (Lawrence KA.: University of Kansas Press, 2001), pp.143-59.

<sup>185</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.144.



number of medals, and joined the Komsomol. The war changed her life beyond recognition. Yet, any hope that being a veteran would open doors was cruelly dashed. On her demobilization in the summer of 1945 she was sent to work at an organization distributing fruit and vegetables (*Lenzagotplodoovoshtorg*) checking the weight of produce. She was told that at the end of the growing season she would be released from this job and would have the opportunity for study further or return to shop work. Seven months later she still had not been released. She had worked as a stevedore and then a cleaner; earning just 200 roubles a month.<sup>186</sup> Of course under-employment and the disappointment created by menial jobs cut across gender. Both sexes would both have to come to terms with post-war careers which failed to satisfy personal aspirations. But women had the added frustration that decisions about their future employment were made on the basis of assumptions about their gender.

The disappointment that women veterans felt about the kinds of work they were allocated was not just an anxiety about material conditions. It also reflected a realization that pre-war misogyny and prevailing attitudes towards gender had not been eradicated by wartime experiences. The Red Army, especially in the summer of 1942 when young women were first recruited, was riven with misogyny.<sup>187</sup> It was not unusual for male soldiers to make angry protests about women's participation in combat. According to Krylova the list of reactions amongst men included growing pale, open-mouthed gasping, swearing, depressed silence and even inarticulate screaming. Overcoming masculine prejudice and demonstrating their effectiveness as soldiers became an important part of women's combat motivation. There were also men who supported women's frontline involvement, who did not react in uniformly uncomprehending and antagonistic ways.<sup>188</sup> For men who had witnessed women's skill at violence at close quarters initial scepticism about female combatants was gradually replaced by a begrudging acceptance of, respect for and even excitement about women soldiers. Over time male and female soldiers often formed close comradely bonds, and accepted each other as part of the same 'military family'. The acceptance that female soldiers sought,

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<sup>186</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.327/op.1/d.81/ll.95-96.

<sup>187</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.134, 206.

<sup>188</sup> Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat. A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.185-87.

and which many achieved, had implications for how they framed their own gender identities after the war.<sup>189</sup>

Amongst fellow *frontoviki* female veterans, to a large degree, could expect to avoid male chauvinism. Yet following their demobilization they came into greater contact with civilians with little or no knowledge or understanding of women's military achievements. 'Rear-line rats' displayed a patronising attitude, which women veterans found particularly galling. The manner in which they were pushed into traditional female occupations, which ignored their wartime achievements, demonstrated that the war had changed society less than they had imagined. The battle for sexual equality would have to be fought all over again. Officially revered as heroes, many women veterans were treated with suspicion even outright hostility. When the medal 'For Battle Merit' (*za boevye zaslugi*) was worn by women, it was often ascribed to sexual merit (*za polevye zaslugi*).<sup>190</sup> Many women would attempt to hide the fact of their frontline service for fear that it would stigmatize them.<sup>191</sup> It was not long before *Krokodil* began publishing smutty cartoons poking fun at women wearing their medals in public.<sup>192</sup> Pre-war gender structures then had not been fundamentally reworked by the war. Nor was military service a guarantor of respect.

### Officers

Rank was another dividing line influencing veterans' re-assimilation into the labour market. Officers, unlike rank and file soldiers, enjoyed better prospects of extending their period of service beyond 1948. Although this was an attractive prospect for many an extraordinary number of former officers chose to settle in post-war Leningrad. By the end of July 1947, according to City *Voenkomat* statistics, 64,684 officers had been demobilized in the city. Officers of all ranks constituted twenty-four per cent of the total number of Leningrad's veterans.<sup>193</sup> This was a remarkably high proportion. It was unlikely that all of these individuals were native Leningraders. A large number were probably attracted to the Soviet Union's second city, despite the level of destruction and deprivation, in the hope of obtaining social advancement. More

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<sup>189</sup> Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat*, pp.236-88.

<sup>190</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.208; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.144.

<sup>191</sup> Alexiyevich, *War's Unwomanly Face*, p.189.

<sup>192</sup> 'Shel soldat s fronta', *Krokodil*, 30 October 1945, p.5.

<sup>193</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.201.

than any other sub-group demobilized officers expected to achieve some form of post-war social advancement. Although former officers were returning to a supposedly classless society most were keen to capitalize upon their status as officers. Career officers and soldiers who had risen from the ranks did not want to relinquish wartime prestige and social capital and return to humble civilian roles.

Ex-officers were better placed than ordinary soldiers to assert their employment rights and demand appropriate work. S.A. Kuznetsov, a demobilized major, refused to return to his pre-war employment as a wagon craftsman, demanding an administrative-managerial position. He refused several further positions including work as an inspector with a salary of 500 roubles, and the position of production leader in an asphalt and concrete factory with salary of 1000 roubles. He demanded a monthly salary no less than 1400 roubles a month.<sup>194</sup> Kuznetsov was typical of many senior ranking ex-officers, who arrived in Leningrad expecting to obtain managerial or administrative positions. A mixture of propaganda and policy stimulated these aspirations. As early as 1944 Colonel General Golikov envisaged preferential employment for demobilized officers in provincial and district soviets, in party posts, particularly in military departments, in the defence industry and even as history teachers in secondary schools.<sup>195</sup> The Frunzenskii district Military Department's annual report for 1945 noted before joining the army many demobilized officers had been ordinary workers, "during their years in the army they gained a great experience of administrative-managerial, party-leadership work and now aspire to positions which correspond with the experience obtained."<sup>196</sup> Many officers took it for granted that man-management skills developed in the armed forces would be in demand amongst Leningrad's employees.

There was no shortage of demobilized officers with glittering leadership credentials in post-war Leningrad. Between July and December 1945, the first six months of mass demobilization, 14,487 officers were discharged in Leningrad.<sup>197</sup> Although there were suggestions that officers were not given sufficient support finding suitable work, officers were re-integrated with moderate success. This would change in 1946 as the pace of demobilization quickened. 23,182 officers were demobilized in

<sup>194</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.79.

<sup>195</sup> Roger R. Reese, *Red Commanders: A Social History of the Soviet Army Officer Corps, 1918-1991* (Lawrence, KA.: University of Kansas Press, 2005), p.181.

<sup>196</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.178.

<sup>197</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.75; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.3.

Leningrad between January and June 1946 and 19,420 between July and December 1946. Nearly sixty-five per cent of all officers returned to Leningrad in 1946.<sup>198</sup> The demobilization of officers would taper off in 1947, with just 7,595 officers demobilized between January and June.<sup>199</sup> In 1946 competition for employment became intense as an influx of former officers all looking for well-paid managerial work flooded the post-war labour market.

Given these problems re-employment rates amongst demobilized officers were impressive. By August 1946, for example, 91 per cent of junior and middle ranking officers and 89 per cent of senior officers had returned to work.<sup>200</sup> Yet finding suitable work generated difficulties. Leningrad's local economy was simply unable to generate sufficient high status work to satisfy demand. The situation was sufficiently challenging for a city-wide commission for the *trudoustroistvo* of demobilized officers to be established in 1946, which helped foster co-operation between party and soviet structures. Indeed the commission claimed credit for raising rates of re-employing newly-arrived officers from 80 per cent between August 1945 and January 1946, to approximately 95 per cent in the seven months of 1946.<sup>201</sup> Despite the commission's best efforts problems persisted. Perhaps the most significant difficulty stemmed from the large proportion of officers who had joined the army straight from school or had served for fifteen to twenty years and had no civilian employment experience.<sup>202</sup> These men had little idea about how civilian administration operated and few professional skills outside of the army. Even within a society as authoritarian as late Stalinism, civilian man-management skills were radically different from army command structures.

Finding vacancies for ex-officers in this position could be especially difficult. Colonel Ivan Ivanov, a professional officer, was refused work as: the head of a fire brigade for a building trust on 16 June 1946, the head of a warehouse at the Molotov factory on 3 July 1946; the head of a supply organization on 9 July 1946, all because of a lack of experience. He was eventually employed as the head of a supply department

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<sup>198</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.108; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.104.

<sup>199</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.201; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.104.

<sup>200</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.134; TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.78.

<sup>201</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.136.

<sup>202</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.134; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.71.

for *Lenpromstoi*, an industrial construction trust, on 20 July.<sup>203</sup> Despite efforts to collate requests for administrative work a large number of ex-officers remained unemployed, sometimes for several months. On 1 September 1946 there were 7402 unemployed ex-officers.<sup>204</sup> The majority of these made efforts to re-enter the workplace, but several hundred consistently refused the positions they were offered, insisted on administrative or managerial work, or work as teachers, doctors and book-keepers, some even absented themselves from the city to take lengthy summer breaks.<sup>205</sup> In order to combat long-term unemployment pressure was applied to recalcitrant ex-officers. 975 were summoned to explain the reasons for their unemployment in July 1946. In addition sixty-four former officers were investigated at their homes. Investigators made contact with thirty-eight, the rest according building administrators and neighbours were rarely at home.<sup>206</sup>

### Rural Veterans

Although many officers did find well paid and prestigious positions it was not possible to satisfy the demand for suitable employment. There were limits on the number who could become senior administrators and managers. This was especially apparent in the rural economy. Historians have often claimed that veterans returned to take charge of the post-war village, becoming the chairmen of collective farms and rural soviets.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, many veterans in the Leningrad oblast assumed the leadership of their communities or were newly promoted to positions of responsibility. Internal party reports noted that ex-servicemen were the main source of recruits for the chairmen of farms, village and district soviets.<sup>208</sup> By the beginning of September 1945, for example, thirty veterans had been elected to leadership roles in the Volkhovskii district. These included three village soviets chairmen and fourteen kolkhoz chairmen.<sup>209</sup> Similarly, the local press rarely missed an opportunity to report an instance where ex-servicemen were

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<sup>203</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.137.

<sup>204</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.75.

<sup>205</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.75-77.

<sup>206</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.139.

<sup>207</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p. 314, 330-31; Hough, 'The Changing Nature of the Kolkhoz Chairman', pp.106-7.

<sup>208</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.7/d.8322/l.5,18,24.

<sup>209</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.11//l.54ob-55.

appointed to positions of authority in the village.<sup>210</sup> However, at the beginning of 1946 there were just 1742 collective farms and ninety state farms in the Leningrad oblast.<sup>211</sup> The number of veterans who would be able to become local leaders was constrained by the number of farms.

The decision to use a thousand former soldiers and their families to repopulate collective farms on the Karelian isthmus created additional opportunities. Veterans were to provide the backbone of new agricultural communities established in newly acquired borderlands. Tough, reliable and stoic heroes were cast as modern-day Cossacks, ideally equipped for new lives in a harsh landscape not ideally suited to collective agriculture.<sup>212</sup> The plans were not entirely successful. By the end of 1945 only 200 families had moved to the region. Indeed, partial figures suggest that seventy per cent of those who initially registered to move to the region later changed their minds.<sup>213</sup>

As 1946 drew to a close *Leningradskiaia pravda* published an article written by a veteran who had joined the *Pobeda* collective farm in the Keksgol'mskii district. The article described the farm and its achievements in glowing terms.<sup>214</sup> The minutes of the kolkhoz general meetings told a different story. A number of veterans joined the farm between September 1945 and March 1946, and the farm expanded from 56 to 122 members between 1946 and 1947. The farm was far from a productive enterprise. By the beginning of 1948 there were just 28 able bodied men aged between 16 and 60 out of a population of 122 members.<sup>215</sup> Despite their numerical inferiority veterans dominated positions of authority. Senior lieutenant Ivan Chernov joined the farm in September 1945, and by 5 April 1946 had risen to become its chairman.<sup>216</sup> In contrast to the propaganda stereotype of the inspirational leadership of veterans turned collective

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<sup>210</sup> For typical examples see 'Demobilizovannye voiny – predsedateli sel'sovetov i kolkhozov', *Leningradskiaia pravda*, 23 October 1945, p.2; 'Demobilizovannye na rukovodiashchei rabote', *Leningradskiaia pravda*, 24 November 1945, p.2; M. Zhestev, 'Derevenskaia khronika', *Leningradskiaia pravda*, 9 May 1946, p.3.

<sup>211</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.7/d.822/l.1.

<sup>212</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.16, 1945, pp.13-15. Kutuzov, *Vozrozhdenie zemli Leningradskoi*, pp.88-90.

<sup>213</sup> Edele, 'Veterans and the Village', p.170.

<sup>214</sup> 'Khoziaeva', *Leningradskiaia pravda*, 26 December 1946, p.3.

<sup>215</sup> LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.653/l.10ob; LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.653/l.1; LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.655/l.1.

<sup>216</sup> LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.651/l.10; LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.652/l.2.

farm chairmen, Chernov's was unpopular.<sup>217</sup> One member of the collective objected to Chernov's militaristic leadership style. When challenged why he was still at home at 13.00 rather than working he responded: "We are not in the army now, as a former officer you should get used to that."<sup>218</sup> Discipline was a recurring problem. Pushkin, a former senior sergeant and member of the farm administration, repeatedly got so drunk that he started fights with other collective farmers.<sup>219</sup> Similar behaviour was recorded in other farms in this district.<sup>220</sup>

A return to agricultural labour was rarely an attractive prospect for ex-servicemen. As the war drew to a close rumours circulated in the Red Army that the state was planning to abolish collective farms, something that said a lot about soldiers' attitudes to collective agriculture.<sup>221</sup> Although peasants made up the bulk of the Red Army, a number of historians have suggested that large numbers of peasant soldiers chose not to return to their former homes and occupations, but contrived to find work in urban areas.<sup>222</sup> More recently Edele has argued that the overwhelming majority of peasant veterans initially returned to the village. Aside from the administrative requirement to return to the location from which they were demobilized, most veterans had a psychological need to return to the homes, families and lives they had left behind. Only in subsequent years, once they had become thoroughly disenchanted with the reality of post-war rural poverty, did peasant veterans drift towards the city. Therefore, once Leningrad had assimilated all those veterans demobilized within its boundaries during mass demobilization, it would have to find further room for rural veterans attracted to the city in hope of a better life.

## **Conclusion**

The process of re-employing veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast was more complicated than the official narrative of demobilization suggested. The claim

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<sup>217</sup> This style of leadership was best captured by the 1963 film *Predsedatel'* directed by A.A. Saltykov, based on the scenario written by Iu. M. Nagibin. See T.M. Dimoni, "'Predsedatel': Sud'by poslevoennoi derevni i kinokartine pervoi poloviny 1960-kh godov", *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, No.6 (2003), pp.91-101.

<sup>218</sup> LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.652/ll.18ob-20 (l.19ob).

<sup>219</sup> LOGAV/f.R-300/op.29/d.652/ll.16ob-17.

<sup>220</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/2v/d.7027/l.40.

<sup>221</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.7, 39.

<sup>222</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Worker and Late Stalinism*, pp.19-20; Duskin, *Stalinist Reconstruction*, p.18; Zubkova, *Russia After the War*.

that veterans were rapidly and successfully turned into civilian workers was partially true. Finding work for hundreds of thousands of veterans in a city and region devastated by war was a remarkable achievement. But such a rapid remobilization of veterans was achieved by infringing upon veterans' legal rights. A large proportion of Leningrad's veterans were directed towards key sectors of the local economy, often with a measure of compulsion, and usually within days of their arrival. The mechanisms used to remobilise veterans created complications. Forcing veterans' into low status jobs that did not take account of pre-war experience generated enormous resentment. Cynicism was an equally common response to the realization that the reality of the post-war employment did not correspond with hopes and expectations fostered by propaganda. Of course propaganda helped mobilize veterans; many identified with the stereotype of exemplary ex-servicemen. In contrast to the propaganda myth only a minority of veterans found employment as leading workers or experienced upward social mobility. Some veterans were fortunate in being able to return to well paid and respected jobs, others were pushed into menial and demeaning work.

The decision to encourage, even force, veterans back into employment within days of demobilization had another consequence. After years of physical exertion, emotional strain and psychological stress veterans were given no opportunity to obtain the rest and recuperation they needed. There was no opportunity to gradually adapt to civilian life. This aggravated veterans' already fragile physical and psychological health. Former soldiers were expected to knuckle down to the tasks allotted to them straight away. This also allowed *frontoviki* no time to dwell on their wartime experiences. Uncomfortable memories had to be repressed at all costs. Not all veterans, however, had the luxury of putting the war behind them. Disabled veterans, another important sub-group, had yet another experience of readjusting to civilian life. They found it even harder to come to terms with the disparity between the reality of demobilization and the official mythology.



### **Chapter 3: Health, Disability and Trauma**

Approximately 250 kilometres from Saint Petersburg and twenty kilometres from the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, Europe's largest lake, stands Valaam, an archipelago of fifty islands. Valaam is perhaps best known for its Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, established between the tenth and fifteenth centuries by Orthodox monks. Today Valaam and its resurgent religious community is a place of pilgrimage and a tourist destination. Yet for historians of late Stalinism Valaam is famous for more sinister reasons. In 1947, according to popular mythology, Stalin ordered that city streets were to be cleared of disabled ex-servicemen. These unfortunates were then to be exiled to 'special colonies' in remote parts of the country, the most infamous of which was allegedly on Valaam.<sup>1</sup> Leningrad's historians place the city at the centre of these stories. They claim that Valaam, which was conveniently close to Leningrad, was populated by war invalids, especially double amputees, cleared from their city's streets.<sup>2</sup>

Stories of forced clearances and the use of Valaam as a dumping ground for the war-disabled have captivated ordinary Leningraders and professional historians. This local version of the myth, fixed on Leningrad and multiple amputees, was retold, without my prompting, in almost every oral history interview I conducted. If the way a society treats former soldiers, particularly disabled veterans, is a barometer of its humanity and compassion, then tales of maimed ex-servicemen being exiled to islands surrounded by ice for five months of the year, have symbolized the post-war plight of Leningrad's war invalids.<sup>3</sup> The Valaam myth has enjoyed longevity because it appears to confirm accepted notions about the repressiveness of the Stalinist state and Soviet society's inhumanity towards the war-disabled. Veterans were publicly heralded as heroes, at the same time as their mangled bodies were hidden from view, because they provoked painful reminders of war's horrors. Valaam is perhaps the most eloquent expression of the disparity between the reality and myth of veterans' post-war reintegration.

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<sup>1</sup> Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, p.98; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.314; Geoffrey Hosking, *Rulers and Victims. The Russians in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge MA., London: Belnap Press, 2006), p.239; Marcus Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians and their War, 1941-1945*, trans. by Rosalind Buck (Madison WI.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p.226; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.63, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.105; Danil Granin, 'Stalinizmy – Net!', *Rodina*, No.3 (2009), pp.48-50 (p.50); 'Kogda Peterburg byl Leningradom "Drugaia istoriia"', *Argumenty i fakty. Peterburg*, No.18 May 2000, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Merridale, 'The Collective Mind', p.39.

Throughout history post-war societies have experienced difficulty in re-integrating disabled veterans into mainstream society. These problems grew increasingly acute in the twentieth century. Developments in military technology created horrific new injuries. Mobilizations of mass conscript armies put ever more soldiers in the firing-line.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 1918 there were approximately eight million disabled veterans in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Advances in military medicine, particularly in infection control and antibiotics, ensured that severely injured soldiers survived the battlefield in greater numbers. During the First World War just twenty per cent of Canadian and American soldiers with spinal cord injuries survived to be repatriated. In the Second World War approximately ninety per cent survived. Sixty per cent of injured survivors of the First World War died in hospitals within two months of their return. In the Second World War mortality rates amongst British, Canadian and American soldiers were cut to between 2.2 and 7.8 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Providing the increasing numbers of surviving disabled veterans of modern warfare with medical and financial support has posed a challenge for all post-war societies.

The myths about Valaam suggest something especially shocking about the treatment of Leningrad's veterans, and by extension Soviet ones. The shameful treatment of the disabled was not, however, a uniquely Soviet problem. The treatment of disabled ex-soldiers, despite good intentions, has repeatedly fallen short of what they deserved. The stinginess of pensioning authorities in Britain and France after 1918, for example, was legendary. Successive governments dodged their responsibilities to disabled veterans, preferring to limit their liabilities rather than submit to veterans' demands for adequate compensation.<sup>7</sup> Everywhere veterans complained of insensitivity and indifference from bureaucrats, who treated the war disabled as little better than beggars and frauds.<sup>8</sup> Few twentieth century post-war societies have a history of treating disabled veterans well. Callousness and neglect towards amputees were common.

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<sup>4</sup> Gerber, 'Introduction: Finding Disabled Veterans in History', in Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History*, pp.1-51 (p.2).

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, 'Civil Society in the Aftermath of the Great War', p.352.

<sup>6</sup> Gerber, 'Introduction: Finding Disabled Veterans in History', p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, 'Civil Society in the Aftermath of the Great War', pp.354-55; Prost, *In The Wake of War*, pp.29-30; Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, pp.60-70.

<sup>8</sup> Gerber, 'Introduction: Finding Disabled Veterans in History', pp.21-22.

Claims for special consideration evaporated relatively quickly.<sup>9</sup> Today disabled veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan face these same difficulties. Ultimately, no matter what assistance is put in place to support the war disabled, they can never be adequately compensated for their sacrifice.

The impulse to hide the war-disabled from public view was neither new nor specifically Soviet. Paris' Hôtel des Invalides and London's Chelsea Hospital were established in the seventeenth century to remove elderly and disabled veterans from the streets.<sup>10</sup> In the twentieth century war invalids became one of the most conspicuous legacies of modern industrialized warfare. Bodies, upon which the war was literally inscribed, were sites of collective memory, which prompted uncomfortable reminders of war's horrors.<sup>11</sup> It was not uncommon for severely mutilated and disfigured veterans to be segregated from wider society in specialist institutions, or for disabled ex-servicemen to withdraw from society. In the 1930s the British Broadcasting Corporation's Addressing Department, from where the *Radio Times* was distributed, was staffed by facially disfigured veterans, hidden from other workers' gaze.<sup>12</sup> Disfigured soldiers routinely faced the aesthetic prejudices of civilians who found contact with the "grotesque" daunting or frightening. In Sidcup after 1918 public benches between the town and The Queen's Hospital, a purpose-built centre for plastic surgery, were painted blue to indicate that they were for the sole use of convalescing patients; a measure designed to protect patients and locals from potentially uncomfortable encounters.<sup>13</sup>

The broader history of disabled veterans' marginalization lends weight to the myth of Valaam. But there is little direct evidence to substantiate stories of disabled veterans being cleared from the streets or exiled to isolated locations. Recent research challenges the myth of their disappearance from the streets in 1947. Fitzpatrick and

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<sup>9</sup> Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p.56; Joanna Bourke, "'Going Home' The Personal Adjustment of British and American Servicemen after the War", in Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (eds), *Life After Death. Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.149-60 (p.150).

<sup>10</sup> Gerber, 'Introduction: Finding Disabled Veterans in History', p.7.

<sup>11</sup> Sabine Kienitz, 'Body Damage. War Disability and Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic', in Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds), *Home/Front, The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp.181-203 (p.182); Seth Koven, 'Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers and the Great War in Great Britain', *American Historical Review*, Vol.99, No.4 (October 1994), pp.1167-1202.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Todman, *The Great War. Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon, 2005), p.62.

<sup>13</sup> Sandy Callister, "'Broken Gargoyles': The Photographic Representation of Severely Wounded New Zealand Soldiers", *Social History of Medicine*, Vol.20, No.1 (2007), pp.111-30 (p.125).

Edele have both suggested that the removal of war invalids from city streets was the product of a decree passed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet against “anti-social parasitic elements” in July 1951. This decree did not directly target disabled veterans, but beggars, tramps, prostitutes and other undesirable elements, which might include the war disabled. It gave the police the power to exile “harmful elements” to special settlements in distant regions for up to five years.<sup>14</sup> It appears to have been inspired by a campaign against collective farm shirkers initiated by Khrushchev in June 1948.<sup>15</sup> These measures did not eliminate begging in Leningrad. In December 1952 a city soviet report accepted that begging continued on the streets, on public transport, in shops, parks, bath-houses and other public spaces.<sup>16</sup> In the first nine months of 1953 over 2,500 beggars were arrested in Leningrad.<sup>17</sup> According to secret reports drafted by the Russian Ministry of State Control in January 1954 there were over 3250 unemployed disabled people within Leningrad, many of whom continued to ‘pursue a parasitic lifestyle.’<sup>18</sup> Amongst Leningrad’s most prominent vagrants were disabled veterans reduced to begging to fund their alcoholism. V.S. Cherepkhov and V.A. Alekseev, both disabled veterans in their fifties, were arrested for vagrancy nineteen and sixteen times respectively in 1953, and twenty-six and twenty times between December 1953 and February 1954.<sup>19</sup>

Historians have been unable to offer any proof of the existence of a war invalids’ colony on Valaam. References to it usually derive from Yuri Nagibin’s novella *Patience* (*Terpenie*), published in *Novyi Mir* in 1982.<sup>20</sup> The work is partially set on Bogoyar, an island in Lake Ladoga, a fictional equivalent of Valaam, “which served as a terminal shelter for those who were maimed by war and who either had not wanted to return to

<sup>14</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, ‘Social Parasites. How tramps, idle youth and busy entrepreneurs impeded the Soviet march to communism’, *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol.47, No.1-2 (January-June 2006), pp.377-408 (p.377, 380-81, 397); Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.94.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Lévesque, ‘Exile and Discipline: The June 1948 Campaign Against Collective Farm Shirkers’, *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, No.1708 (September 2006).

<sup>16</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.406/l.259.

<sup>17</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost’ i bor’ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.67.

<sup>18</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-339/op.4/d.355/l.25.

<sup>19</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-339/op.4/d.355/l.12, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Yuri Nagibin, ‘Terpenie’, *Novyi Mir*, No.2 (1982), pp.25-53. Reference to this work is made by the following: Vera Dunham, ‘Images of the Disabled. Especially the War Wounded in Soviet Literature’, in William O. McCagg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (eds), *The Disabled in the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, PA.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), pp.151-64 (pp.160-63), Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, pp.98-99, Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.63.

their homes, or who were refused acceptance there.”<sup>21</sup> Nagibin’s novella and the Leningrad version of the Valaam myth have similarities, but it is unclear whether *Patience* was informed by myths already in circulation, or whether it breathed life into a pre-existing oral tradition. Most probably the two were inter-dependent. Historians have accepted the existence of Valaam on little more than these stories.

Other evidence is at best fragmentary. In May 1988 *Literaturnaia gazeta* published a portrait of Alexander Podonesov, an inmate of the Valaam colony paralysed whilst fighting in Karelia, drawn by the anti-war artist Gennadii Dobrov (Figure 4).<sup>22</sup> In 2004 Evgenii Kuznetsov, a retired tour guide who began leading tours on the Valaam archipelago shortly after it began welcoming tourists in 1964, published his memoirs. According to Kuznetsov an institution for disabled veterans was established on Valaam in 1950 by the Supreme Soviet of the Karelian-Finnish Socialist Soviet Republic. His memoirs claim that approximately 600 patients were housed in the main territory of the Transfiguration Monastery, and a further eighty psychiatric patients on a separate island. Inmates were served by a staff of approximately 600 doctors, nurses, cleaners and other support workers.<sup>23</sup> Although Kuznetsov claims to have been an eyewitness his account makes reference to, and owes a debt to, Nagibin’s novella; a work Kuznetsov expresses great respect and admiration for.<sup>24</sup> More frequently one encounters unsubstantiated references to Valaam as a dumping ground for disabled veterans in tourist guides or websites.

Documents preserved in the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia, examined for the first time as part of this research, prove the existence of a residential home (*dom internatov*) for the disabled and elderly on Valaam. The institution was established by the Karelian-Finnish Council of Ministers on 5 May 1950, not as Edele suggests in 1952.<sup>25</sup> Prior to this there had been plans to turn the Valaam monastery into

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<sup>21</sup> Dunham, ‘Images of the Disabled’, p.161.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Avtografy voiny. Litsy skorbi i muzhestva’, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 25 May 1988, p.13. Broekmeyer refers to this as a photograph, *Stain, the Russians and their War*, p.226.

<sup>23</sup> Evgenii Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad* (Saint-Petersburg: Rostok, 2004), p.7, 75-82.

<sup>24</sup> Kuznetsov, *Valaamskaia tetrad*, p.78.

<sup>25</sup> National’nyi Arkhiv Respubliki Karelia [hereafter NARK] f.1394/op.6/d.1404/l.189, 408. Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.94.

a sanatorium for the use of the paper production industry.<sup>26</sup> Once established the *dom internatov* came under the control of the Karelian-Finnish Ministry of Social Security, the archives of which preserve fascinating evidence about residents' living conditions.



**Figure 4: Portrait of Alexander Podosenov, by Gennadi Dobrov, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 25 May 1988, p.13.**

The reality of this institution was somewhat different from popular myths and historians' subsequent interpretations. Rather than being established to segregate disabled veterans rounded up from the streets, the Valaam "colony" was the result of the consolidation of seven smaller institutions scattered across Karelia. In total 775 patients and 177 employees were transferred from these institutions.<sup>27</sup> Many of the patients were not disabled war veterans, but mentally ill, disabled or elderly civilians. In 1947 the institutions which later formed the Valaam *dom invalidov* contained just 75 disabled

<sup>26</sup> 'Sanatorii na ostrove – Valaamskii monastyr' prevrashchaetsia v zdravnitsy', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 13 July 1946, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1404/l.189, 196.

veterans.<sup>28</sup> In September 1952 a recommendation was made that separate institutions were created on Valaam for the elderly, industrially injured, the blind, the congenitally disabled and war invalids. The proposed facilities for the war disabled were to accommodate fifty veterans.<sup>29</sup>

Conditions were every bit as bad as historians have speculated. The Monastery's buildings, bombed in 1940, needed extensive reconstruction. Walls had to be repaired, plastered and painted; window frames repaired and re-glazed.<sup>30</sup> The shortage of skilled construction workers meant that the majority of work was undertaken by disabled patients.<sup>31</sup> By September 1952 Valaam was home to 904 disabled patients and 530 members of staff.<sup>32</sup> There were shortages of furniture, mattresses, blankets, pillows and sheets. Washing facilities, water-supply and heating systems were in disrepair, for want of parts and skilled specialists.<sup>33</sup> In March 1953 the Karelian Ministry of Social Security conducted, in response to a letter of complaint, an inspection of the facility. The report listed a catalogue of problems. The cloisters, now converted into accommodation for residents, were cold and dirty. Hygiene was abysmal, no doubt hampered by problems with water-supply and washing facilities. Beds were infested with lice and cockroaches. An influenza epidemic prevented staff from washing patients for over two months. The resident doctor, hampered by shortages of basic medical supplies and equipment, provided only the most basic treatment. Fights regularly broke out between residents at mealtimes. The lack of adaptive equipment made eating a degrading experience. The shortage of mugs meant that disabled residents were forced to slurp tea from shallow bowls. The report also recommended that Svistunov, the *dom internatov*'s director, was dismissed. His earlier reports of improving conditions on Valaam had been revealed as outright lies.<sup>34</sup>

Conditions did not improve. As late as September 1960, ten years after the home's establishment, the Karelian Council of Ministers was still demanding an

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<sup>28</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.665/ll.1-8.

<sup>29</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/1.47.

<sup>30</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1404/1.198.

<sup>31</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1404/1.191, 201, 408 and NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/1.45.

<sup>32</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/1.412.

<sup>33</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/1.47.

<sup>34</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1783/ll.534-37.

improvement in leadership, medical provision and living conditions. A month earlier residents had been hit by a mass outbreak of food poisoning, attributed to the unsanitary condition of the kitchen block.<sup>35</sup> Supplying an island located in Europe's largest lake, cut off from the mainland by ice for five months of the year, was very difficult. Attempts to grow grain and vegetables, harvest fruit and to fish met with limited success.<sup>36</sup> Most of Valaam's food was brought in. But incompetent planning meant that the institution's warehouse and shop often contained little more than rye flour, processed fat and sugar. Vodka, however, was always available. It was probably the only thing that made life bearable for residents and staff, and may have even been used as a way of controlling residents' behaviour.<sup>37</sup>

Valaam's isolation also made obtaining equipment and recruiting medical staff difficult. Institutional tensions aggravated this situation. The Karelian Ministry of Social Security blamed the lack of medical facilities on the Ministry of Health's repeated failure to send doctors, nurses and equipment.<sup>38</sup> For its part the Ministry of Health was baffled by the Valaam project. As Zhuralev, the Karelian Minister of Health, argued in September 1952; "When the decision was taken to organize a hospital (*sic*) on this island, the reason for this was not clear to us." He was not concerned about Valaam's vulnerable residents. Zhuralev was perturbed that medical facilities were being organized for unproductive disabled citizens whilst ordinary workers on the mainland went without adequate provision. He argued that the money would be better spent improving the nearest hospital in Sortavalo.<sup>39</sup>

The organization of a *dom internatov* on Valaam for disabled and elderly citizens from Karelia was a disgrace. However, the truth about this institution was somewhat different from the stories and myths which continue to circulate today. The treatment of the hundred or so disabled veterans housed on Valaam was reprehensible, but the island was not home to war invalids cleared from Leningrad's streets. How then does one explain the emergence and persistence of the myth of Valaam, given its flimsy factual basis? The answer lies in the broader history of the difficulties faced by disabled

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<sup>35</sup> NARK/f.690/l.11/d.517/l.178-80.

<sup>36</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/l.412.

<sup>37</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/l.19, 46; NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1404/l.265.

<sup>38</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1404/l.365, 410.

<sup>39</sup> NARK/f.1394/op.6/d.1806/l.18.



veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast in the years immediately following the end of the Great Patriotic War. In the rest of this chapter I examine the additional challenges that disabled veterans faced in readapting to life after the war. War invalids, unlike their able-bodied comrades, faced the added complexities of obtaining a pension, finding suitable employment and accessing the medical care they so desperately required. This was in addition to coming to terms with the lasting physical and psychological impacts of war, and widespread social stigmas attached to disability. I argue that despite their theoretical privileges Leningrad's war disabled were routinely pushed aside. In a society in which the real needs of the disabled, including war invalids, were often ignored, rumours that disabled beggars were cleared from the streets and consigned to institutions beyond the gaze of the community were entirely plausible.

### **The Numbers of Disabled Veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad Oblast**

According to the Leningrad Research Institute of Work Fitness and the Organization of Work for the Disabled (*Leningradskii nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut ekspertizy trudosposobnosti i organizatsii truda invalidov* – LIETIN), a key organization in assisting disabled veterans back into employment, 35,498 former soldiers were declared disabled by medical boards between June 1945 and June 1946.<sup>40</sup> Several historians cite this figure as a reliable measure of the number of war invalids resident in Leningrad,<sup>41</sup> but in fact the number of disabled veterans was much higher. By 1 May 1946 there were 48,483 war invalids claiming pensions from district social security offices in Leningrad, Petrodvorets, Kolpino, Pushkin, and Kronstadt; 47,233 in Leningrad. Only sixty-five per cent or 30,729 were registered with the Medical Labour Commissions from which LIETIN compiled its figures.<sup>42</sup> In subsequent months the number of disabled ex-servicemen claiming pensions in Leningrad grew. After all in May 1946 there were 1,046,000 soldiers still receiving treatment in Soviet military

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<sup>40</sup> Tsentral'nyi gosudarsyvennyi arkhiv mauchno-tekhnicheskoi dokumentatsii Sankt-Peterburga [hereafter TsGANTD-SPb] f.368/op.1-1/d.46/1.1.

<sup>41</sup> Andrei Dzeniskevich, 'Medical Research Institutes During the Siege', in Barber and Dzeniskevich (eds), *Life and Death*, pp.86-122 (p.111); Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.104.

<sup>42</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420.1.40, 43; V.P. Biakina, *Vosstanovlenie i razvitie zdavookhranenie v poslevoennyi period: 1945 – seredina 50-kh godov (na materialakh severo-zapade SSSR)* (Saint-Petersburg: Izdatelestvo SPbGMU, 1999), p.150.

hospitals, awaiting a future discharge.<sup>43</sup> By the beginning of January 1947 there were 53,334 disabled veterans registered with Leningrad's district social security offices.<sup>44</sup> War invalids, therefore, constituted approximately eighteen per cent of the total number of veterans demobilized in the city.<sup>45</sup> This was an extraordinary number of disabled ex-servicemen and women for a war-torn city to reintegrate and support. To put this in perspective, in 1948 there were 45,000 disabled veterans in the whole of Great Britain.<sup>46</sup>

Many disabled ex-servicemen settling in Leningrad were not "native Leningraders" (*korennye Leningradtsy*), but post-war migrants. The number of war-invalids resident in the Leningrad oblast' was significantly smaller than the city. In January 1945, for example, the NKVD had record of 4134 disabled veterans in the oblast, although by July 1945 the regional social security offices paid pensions to 13,951 war invalids.<sup>47</sup> Disabled veterans who had once lived in Leningrad's rural hinterland, like war-invalids across the Soviet Union, may have chosen to take advantage of their relative freedom of movement and start their lives afresh in a new place.<sup>48</sup> Post-war migrants were drawn to Leningrad for many reasons. Its historic cityscape, proud revolutionary heritage, heroic wartime myths and the special atmosphere of Russia's western-facing cultural capital were all part of the attraction. Practical considerations also played their part. Life in a major Soviet city, even one living in the shadow of mass death and wartime destruction, was an attractive prospect for war-invalids living in isolated villages. Finding suitable work and claiming a pension were likely to be easier in the Soviet Union's second city, than in an isolated village. Most importantly, Leningrad's standing as the leading centre of Soviet medicine made it especially attractive. In order to obtain medical treatment many veterans were obliged to move to places with the requisite resources, and the majority of veterans formally classified as disabled in the city had very serious injuries or illnesses. According to LIETIN's figures, the most common reasons for disability amongst

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<sup>43</sup> G.F. Kirvosheev (ed.), *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century* (London, Greenhill Books, 1997), pp.91-92.

<sup>44</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.8230/l.1.

<sup>45</sup> Author's own calculation based on 246,218 veterans in Leningrad at the beginning of 1947. TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.104.

<sup>46</sup> Bourke, "Going Home", p.150.

<sup>47</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.110/l.20; LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.75/l.1.

<sup>48</sup> Edele, 'A "Generation of Victors?"', pp.138-39.

veterans were amputated limbs, damaged joints, and broken bones. 25.1 per cent of war invalids had damaged or amputated upper limbs and 28.5 per cent damaged or amputated lower limbs.<sup>49</sup> These problems could not always be treated within villages.

The number of ex-service personnel classified as war-invalids poorly reflected the physical price paid by the Great Patriotic War's combatants. Fieseler estimates that eight per cent of all serving Red Army soldiers were permanently disabled by the war.<sup>50</sup> Yet many millions were seriously injured on the frontlines. Between 1941 and 1945 there were over 22.3 million instances of hospitalization, including 14.7 million cases of injury and 7.6 million cases of sickness.<sup>51</sup> Few soldiers escaped the war without experiencing some damage to their bodies. Most were hospitalized at least once during the war; many were injured multiple times. Listing the number and nature of injuries sustained at the front became key components in the formulation of post-war letters of complaint.<sup>52</sup> By April 1946 1595 veterans had been demobilized as part of the second demobilization wave, because they had received three or more wounds.<sup>53</sup> The rigid implementation of regulations governing what constituted invalidity hid the true extent of war related illness and sickness.

Even if a soldier survived the war without disability, the conflict had taken its toll on their health. Official sources are largely silent about the lingering aches and pains, the long-term effects of malnutrition or even the dental problems experienced by veterans. But returning veterans were physically and mentally exhausted by the war. Most soldiers had served continuously since the day they volunteered or were conscripted without formal leave.<sup>54</sup> Many were visibly aged by the stresses and privations of wartime armed service. Leningrad's doctors and nurses lacked the time and resources to pay much attention to the digestive complaints, raised blood pressure or heart problems observed amongst some veterans in the first few months of peace.<sup>55</sup> Only veterans with obvious physical wounds could expect medical treatment. Prevailing

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<sup>49</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1d.46/l.4.

<sup>50</sup> Beate Fieseler, 'The bitter legacy of the "Great Patriotic War"', p.47.

<sup>51</sup> Kirvosheev (ed.), *Soviet Casualties*, pp.87-88.

<sup>52</sup> Varga-Harris, 'Forging Citizenship on the Home Front', p.106.

<sup>53</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.41-2, 75-76.

<sup>54</sup> B. Shnaider, 'Neizvestnaia voina', *Voprosy istorii*, No.1 (1995), pp.104-13 (p.109).

<sup>55</sup> Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat in the Red Army', pp.322-23; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.315.

conceptions of stoic masculinity and the gaunt figures of women and children persuaded many veterans that their own health problems were of secondary importance to that of their families.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed disabled veterans were competing with the rest of the population for limited medical resources. The war had not only damaged combatants' health; it had been fought at the expense of that of the whole nation. Throughout the war malnourished civilians had been overworked and exhausted, compromising their immunity to illness and disease.<sup>57</sup> The catastrophic state of sanitation made the urban population vulnerable to diseases such as tuberculosis, typhus, typhoid, dysentery and respiratory infections.<sup>58</sup> These problems were particularly severe in post-war Leningrad. Civilians, reduced to little more than walking skeletons during the worst days of the blockade, suffered from the after-effects of starvation for the rest of their lives. Re-evacuees often returned to Leningrad in poor physical condition, and required medical attention. Although the besieged city was miraculously spared a wartime epidemic of disease, it was left with a severely weakened population. Wartime survival often came at the expense of physical health.

### **Disability Classification and Medical Labour Expert Commissions**

The first obstacle faced by war invalids was to be formally registered as disabled by a Medical-Labour Expert Commission (*Vrachebno-Trudovaia Ekspertnaia Kommissiia* – VTEK). Similar commissions had examined people with disabilities throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Great Patriotic War's enormous physical cost, however, increased the demand for medical examination by VTEKi, and changed the purpose and procedure of these panels.<sup>59</sup> The doctors, trade-unionists and social security officials who sat on VTEKi were responsible for determining the severity of injuries, making suggestions for appropriate future employment and issuing disability certificates, a document essential for claiming a pension. The extent of disability was

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<sup>56</sup> This point was made to me by a number of veterans in an oral history interview with a group of veterans from the Petrogradskii district, 27 November 2007, Disc 3. See also Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, "The Alienated Body": Gender Identity and the Memory of the Siege of Leningrad', in Nancy M. Wingfield and Marcia Bucur (eds.), *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp.220-34.

<sup>57</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, p.100.

<sup>58</sup> Filtzer, 'Standard of Living versus Quality of Life', p.95.

<sup>59</sup> Christopher Burton, 'Medical Welfare During Late-Stalinism. A Study of Doctors and the Soviet Health System, 1945-53' (Ph.D Thesis, University of Chicago, 2000), pp.264-69.

measured by three disability categories. Group I invalidity applied to individuals who had completely lost the capacity to work and required full-time nursing care. Group II applied to individuals who had lost the ability to work, but did not require regular medical care. Group III invalidity applied to people considered fit for work in low level employment, possibly with special working conditions and shortened shifts. Disability, in keeping with the Stalinist regime's productionist goals, was based on the ability to work, rather than an individual's state of health.<sup>60</sup>

Medical examination was the first step in the often lengthy and frustrating process of registering for a disability pension. Proud disabled *frontoviki* experienced administrative and bureaucratic obstacles as a series of petty humiliations and insults. Obtaining access to these commissions was difficult. Even in Leningrad, a city at the centre of the Soviet medical establishment, disabled veterans might have to wait over six weeks for an appointment, and then spend the best part of the day waiting to be seen.<sup>61</sup> At times members of Leningrad's VTEKi claim to have at times worked eleven hour days, rather than the statutory eight hour day, to clear the backlog.<sup>62</sup> In October 1945 there were approximately 170 doctors working for fifty VTEKi spread across Leningrad.<sup>63</sup> Outside of the city there were fewer commissions; by 1948 there were just forty-one VTEKi in the whole Leningrad oblast.<sup>64</sup> Until 1948 VTEKi were permitted to examine individuals in their homes, but most examinations were conducted at hospitals and polyclinics.<sup>65</sup> This created special difficulties for war invalids living in isolated rural settlements. Amputees, blind or paralyzed veterans were probably deterred from making the arduous and inconvenient journeys, something which prevented them from claiming a pension.<sup>66</sup>

Doctors and VTEKi officials rarely had sufficient time to conduct adequate examination, which as a result were often perfunctory and humiliating. They were

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<sup>60</sup> *Invalidy v Rossii: prichiny i dinamika invalidnosti protivorechiia i perspektivy sotsial'noi politiki* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999), pp.32-42; Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy', p.47.

<sup>61</sup> TsGA-SPB/f.2554/op.2/d.502/l.3; 'Zashchitnikam rodiny – zaboty i vnimanie – obzor pisem', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 25 May 1946, p.2.

<sup>62</sup> TsGA-SPB/f.2554/op.2/d.502/l.3-4, 8.

<sup>63</sup> TsGAIPD-SPB/f.25/op.12/d.342/l.57-58.

<sup>64</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.104/l.25.

<sup>65</sup> Burton, 'Medical Welfare', p.279.

<sup>66</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.314.

conducted in cold, unequipped and dilapidated buildings. Little attention was paid to the privacy or dignity of disabled veterans, who were likely to be uncomfortable bearing their scars or stumps in public. It was not uncommon for several examinations to be conducted simultaneously, in sight of each other.<sup>67</sup> The pressure of work meant that VTEKi inevitably cut corners, made mistakes or treated the war-disabled with disdain. VTEKi often restricted their activity to ruling on the level of disability, and frequently ignored the requirement to suggest suitable forms of employment for the disabled. This had consequences for future employability. Employers were reluctant to recruit potentially unproductive workers without documentary proof of their fitness for a specific role.<sup>68</sup> VTEKi boards were unpopular; their members viewed as little better than the 'rats' distributing housing and employment. One group of war-invalids wrote to the Leningrad Party Committee complaining that VTEKi chairmen and doctors were all Jews. The denunciation was taken seriously and investigated by officials.<sup>69</sup>

The workload under which Leningrad's VTEKi were struggling was partly the product of a requirement that disabled people underwent regular re-examinations, sometimes as often as every three months.<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Social Security reports from June 1946 calculated that approximately fourteen per cent of war invalids were reviewed four times a year. A further forty-four per cent were re-examined every six months, the remainder annually.<sup>71</sup> Until a reform of the VTEK system in 1948 even the blind, certain amputees and those with two or more paralyzed limbs had to undergo annual re-examination.<sup>72</sup> Disabled veterans resented the inconvenience and intrusion of regular re-assessment. They often joked about the absurdity of the situation, questioning whether officials thought their amputated limbs might grow back.<sup>73</sup> Black humour hid disappointment. The requirement for re-examination was indicative of the state's

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<sup>67</sup> 'Na gorodskie temy. Na priem k vrachy', *Leningradskaya pravda*, 22 October 1946, p.3. Similar conditions were reported for neighbouring Pskov and Vologda oblasts. TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.56/1.1.1-5/11.26-27ob; TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.57/11.5-6, 25-27. For reports from other regions of the Soviet Union see Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', p.371.

<sup>68</sup> TsGA-SPB/f.2554/op.2/2508/11.5-8; *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo univ. im. A. S. Pushkina*, No.14, 1948, pp.1-4 (1.2).

<sup>69</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.342/11.57-58.

<sup>70</sup> Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy', p.47; Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', p.370.

<sup>71</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.2554/op.2/d.502/1.4.

<sup>72</sup> Burton, 'Medical Welfare', p.279.

<sup>73</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.24.

suspicion towards disabled veterans. Veterans' hopes that the wartime sacrifices had reconfigured their relationship with their government were punctured by the state's lack of trust.

The process of examination and re-examination was part of the late Stalinist state's attempt to minimise the financial burden created by unproductive war invalids dependent on disability pensions. Many veterans were placed in a lower disability grouping than their injuries merited. Re-examination often meant a downgrading in disability or complete declassification.<sup>74</sup> This was particularly the case in Leningrad, where a higher proportion of disabled ex-servicemen were categorized as group III compared to the national average. According to LIETIN's figures 84.9 per cent of disabled veterans with an amputated arm, 83.7 per cent with an amputated leg and 57 per cent with both arms amputated or severely damaged were classified as group III war invalids.<sup>75</sup> This was not coincidence. A number of Leningrad doctors and social security officials associated with LIETIN advocated that disability classification was adapted to better reflect post-war circumstances. In 1945 in a lengthy article in *Vrachebnoe delo* N.A. Vigdorchik argued for a more 'rational' form of classification, particularly in relation to group II invalidity, which better reflected the ability of many group II invalids to work.<sup>76</sup> Averbakh, a leading expert at LIETIN, argued that eighty-five per cent of disabled veterans who had lost mobility could be allocated group III invalidity and assigned work in normal conditions.<sup>77</sup> These views appear to have heavily influenced Leningrad's VTEKi and local decision making.

### **Pensions**

Throughout the twentieth century the payment of disability pensions has been a source of tension between war invalids and the states for which they fought. After both the First and Second World Wars European and North American governments tended to restrict or limit the massive burden created by disability pensions. Viewed against this background the difficulties Leningrad's veterans had in securing pensions were far from

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<sup>74</sup> Burton, 'Medical Welfare', p.270' Averbakh, 'Sostoianie vrachebnoe-trudovoi ekspertizy v RSFSR', p.270.

<sup>75</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.46/ll.5-6.

<sup>76</sup> N.A. Vigdorchik, 'K voprosy o peresmotre deistvuiushchei klassifikatsii invalidnosti', *Vrachebnoe delo*, Nos.11-12, (1945), pp.602-06.

<sup>77</sup> A.Ia. Averbakh, 'Sostoianie vrachebnoe-trudovoi ekspertizy v RSFSR', in N.M. Obodan (ed.), *Vozvrashchenie k trudovoi deiatel'nosti invalidov otechestvennoi voyny i invalidov truda. Sbornik spravochnykh materialov*, pp.22-31 (p.27).

unusual. The resentment that Soviet war invalids felt about the meagre support provided by the party-state had much in common with the war disabled of other conflicts. Even in nation states which had relatively generous provisions for the war-disabled, soldiers whose minds and bodies had been severely damaged continued to demand more.

The experience of claiming a disability pension conflicted sharply with disabled veterans' official status as the most privileged group of ex-service personnel. While labels such as '*frontovik*' or 'veteran' were largely symbolic, an "Invalid of the Great Patriotic War" was an official administrative category, which came with a range of entitlements to practical assistance. War invalids enjoyed disability pensions and tax privileges, were exempt from higher education tuition fees, and were supposed to get preferential access to housing, food, fuel and other essential goods.<sup>78</sup> Most veterans lost the residual entitlements linked to demobilization in the course of 1947 and 1948. Disabled veterans, however, kept most of their privileges. Propaganda campaigns continued to promote the message that the war disabled were the best protected of Soviet citizens. Pronouncements of 'care and attention' (*zabota*) for disabled veterans made in political speeches and legislation, were quickly adopted as propaganda slogans. The press was full of articles detailing welfare payments and retraining schemes for war-invalids.<sup>79</sup> Yet the reality of fitting back into mainstream civilian society was radically different from the propaganda campaign. The disparity between official commitments and the manner in which they were treated were not lost on individual veterans. In a letter intercepted by Leningrad's military censor one war invalid expressed his feeling of being unwanted by society:

"You hear by radio (that everything) is simply splendid, you think that everyone is pleased to see you, but as you begin (to settle in) you aren't needed by anyone... A campaign of any kind is just a celebration, it's all just agitation, in fact there isn't anything; in general they are just blowing smoke in your eyes."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.84.

<sup>79</sup> 'Zabota ob invalidakh otechestvennoi voiny', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 17 December 1945, p.1; 'Zabota ob invalidakh', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 16 February 1946, p.1; 'Zabota ob invalidakh otechestvennoi voiny', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 20 April 1946, p.1; 'Bol'shaia zabota. Invalidy otechestvennoi voiny na proizvodstve', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 24 August 1946, p.1; 'Zabota o sem'iakh voennoslyzhashchikh i invalidakh voiny', *Elektrosila*, 4 August 1945, p.2; 'Zabota ob invalidakh otechestvennoi voiny i sem'iakh frontovikov', *Leningradskii Universitet*, 21 July 1946, p.2; 'Zabota ob invalidakh Otechestvennoi voiny', *Trud*, 2 April 1946, p.4.

<sup>80</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.4.



Obtaining a disability certificate from a VTEK was just the first stage in a lengthier struggle to claim a pension. There was more form filling, queuing and red-tape ahead. Leningrad's district Social Security offices, responsible for administering disability pensions, were as over-worked, under-resourced and inefficient as district housing departments or *raspredbiuro*. According to a letter published in *Leningradskaiia pravda* in October 1946 lengthy queues began forming outside the Dzerzhinskii social security office from 07.00.<sup>81</sup> Once inside disabled veterans often had to wait for hours in dark, dirty and crowded corridors, before finally gaining admittance to the officials responsible for their cases.<sup>82</sup> Shortages of furniture meant that disabled people might have to wait for hours standing on uncomfortable prosthetic limbs or crutches.<sup>83</sup> The official which dealt with disabled veterans could be indifferent to their plight. One veteran hobbled into a district social security office in the Leningrad oblast' hoping to register for a pension. He was told; "I see that your leg has been amputated, but we won't pay benefits while you don't have a certificate."<sup>84</sup>

A procuracy investigation of Leningrad's Social Security Department conducted in October 1948 revealed a catalogue of problems. Pensions applications were processed slowly, decisions about eligibility were often wrong, and over and under payments were common. Pensioners arriving from, or leaving for, other regions experienced lengthy delays in transferring their personal records. Letters of complaint went unanswered for weeks or months. Officials were even sacked because of rudeness towards pensioners.<sup>85</sup> Social security officials in the Leningrad oblast had an even worse appreciation of the complexities of pensions' legislation. Miscalculations and mistakes were inevitable.<sup>86</sup> An internal oblast' Social Security investigation conducted in November 1948 revealed that 50,312 roubles had been overpaid to war-invalids.<sup>87</sup> In the Pashskii, Kingiseppskii and Luzhskii districts the committees responsible for

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<sup>81</sup> 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – Malo poraiadka v Dzerzhinskom raisobese', *Leningradskaiia pravda*, 30 October 1946, p.3.

<sup>82</sup> See for example letters of complaint from disabled veterans published in the press: 'Zashchitnikam rodiny – zaboty i vnimanie – obzor pisem', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 25 May 1946, p.2; 'Inspektor naznachet na priem (Pis'ma v redaktsiiu)', *Leningradskaiia pravda*, 9 April 1946, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No. 12, 1949, pp.2-4 (p.2).

<sup>84</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.4/d.53/l.4.

<sup>85</sup> LOGAV/f.4380/op.2/d.290/l.1-3.

<sup>86</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.2, 1949, pp.11-13.

<sup>87</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.173/l.127-138 (l.130).

awarding pensions met only once or twice a month creating lengthy delays in the award and payment of individual pensions. There were even instances of social security funds being embezzled in both the city and oblast.<sup>88</sup> In 1947 an RSFSR Ministry of Social Security investigation revealed an unhealthy working culture of mistrust, gossip and intrigue amongst Leningrad's officials. Twelve employees had awarded themselves 5300 roubles from emergency funds intended to help war veterans. Other members of staff obtained clothing or sanatoria passes intended for the disabled.<sup>89</sup> Corruption in Leningrad's social security apparatus had not reached the levels uncovered in other areas of the Soviet Union, but it did exist.<sup>90</sup>

Once a veteran finally convinced officials of their eligibility for a pension receiving the money presented a further obstacle. Viktorov a disabled former officer wrote to *Leningradskaia pravda* about the difficulties collecting his pension from the Central State Bank on Nevskii Prospekt. Standing in line for several hours in a jostling crush wasted the best part of the day, and would have been tiring for most Leningraders let alone a disabled veteran.<sup>91</sup> Things were harder for pensioners resident in collective farms miles from the nearest banks or post-offices, who faced difficult monthly journeys to collect their benefits. Even those war invalids fortunate enough to receive pensions by post sometimes experienced masses of red-tape and lengthy delays in receiving payments.<sup>92</sup>

Despite the propaganda, the pensions available to the Great Patriotic War's disabled veterans were not generous; at best they were modest and at worst wholly inadequate. The amount a war invalid received was dependent upon: disability category, military rank and previous earnings, and determining it was a complicated calculation. But for simplicity the legislation can be reduced to its key principles. The most severely disabled veterans received significantly higher pensions than those who had retained some work capacity. Officers and non-commissioned officers received slightly higher pensions, and professional soldiers were administered under different rules. Urban

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<sup>88</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.2, 1949, p.11.

<sup>89</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/ll.23-30.

<sup>90</sup> RGASPI/f.17/d.122/d.213/ll.37-40.

<sup>91</sup> 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – Uporiadochit' vydachy pensii v Gosbanke', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 13 August 1946, p.2.

<sup>92</sup> 'Putaniki iz raisobesa', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 17 April 1946, p.3.

workers received more than agricultural workers. Individuals who could prove they had earned more than 400 roubles a month before military service could expect higher pensions. Unfortunately, few disabled veterans were able to prove their former earnings.

Based on the provisions of the 1940 pensions regulations monthly payments ranged from a maximum of 500 roubles for officers with group I invalidity and pre-war salaries over 400 roubles, to a minimum of 90 roubles for group III invalids from the ranks who had not worked, or those who had earned fewer than 150 roubles a month.<sup>93</sup> In January 1946 the minimum sums paid to group I war invalids injured on the frontlines were raised to 300 roubles for urban workers, and 250 roubles for agricultural workers, but such payments were not enough to drag the most seriously injured out of poverty.<sup>94</sup> Even at their most generous disability pensions could not secure a comfortable existence. As Zubkova argues, “it was very difficult, almost impossible, to live on a single invalid’s pension”, let alone support a family without supplementary income.<sup>95</sup> Since disability pensions barely covered essential expenditure on food, fuel and clothing they did little to alleviate the misery of post-war life. Such meagre state pensions hardly seemed like adequate compensation for the sacrifices made by disabled ex-servicemen. As Mark Edele writes, most war invalids were, “in a situation where the symbolic affirmation of their status was coupled with poverty – a recipe for resentment.”<sup>96</sup>

## **Work**

For the late Stalinist state the overriding priority was reintegrating injured veterans into the workforce, rather than providing adequate pensions. Leningrad was at the centre of national policy discussions on the issue, and social security officials in the city, such as N.M. Obodan and A. Ia. Averbakh, both attached to LIETIN, were important participants.<sup>97</sup> Both contributed to a book, published by LIETIN, which discussed the legislative and policy framework and disseminated practical advice on re-

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<sup>93</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.87; Edele, ‘A Generation of Victors’, pp.365-67.

<sup>94</sup> *Biulleten’ Lenobispolkoma*, No.4, 1946, p.1; *Biulleten’ Lengorispolkoma*, No.4, 1946, p.2; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.88.

<sup>95</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.24.

<sup>96</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.88.

<sup>97</sup> Burton devotes considerable attention Obodan’s and Averbakh’s view, and considers them important contributors to the policy debate. Burton, *Medical Welfare*, pp.264-80.

employing disabled veterans informed by the institute's research. The book became an important reference work and the RSFSR Ministry of Social Security ordered that 5000 copies were circulated to medical institutions in Soviet Russia.<sup>98</sup> Re-employment, as it was for able-bodied veterans, was envisaged as a pre-condition for turning soldiers back into civilians. Much greater effort was expended re-employing war invalids than other disabled citizens. This explains why overall levels of employment amongst the war disabled were higher than amongst other groups of disabled people.<sup>99</sup>

The determination to harness disabled veterans' productive capacity was not solely motivated by the therapeutic needs of the individual. Paid employment was also used as a means of reducing the financial burden placed upon the state. The payment of disability pensions was closely linked to employment. Group I and group II invalids received a full pension irrespective of income derived from work and agriculture. But, in January 1943 incentives were created to encourage group III war-invalids to work. Full pensions were paid regardless of additional income, but individuals avoiding work for more than two months could lose their pension.<sup>100</sup> Legislation was tightened again in October 1948. Group III invalids had their pensions cut if their combined income exceeded their pre-war earnings. In the countryside pensions were cut for all group III invalids with an income other than from their wage.<sup>101</sup> As Edele summarizes: "If during and/ immediately after the war a third group invalid could choose between not receiving a pension, and working and receiving a full pension, after October 1948 the choice to work as a rule only guaranteed a reduced pension."<sup>102</sup> These changes discouraged a small number of veterans resident in the Leningrad oblast, usually those with agricultural plots and family support, from working.<sup>103</sup>

In purely statistical terms social security officials and employers in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast were highly successful in re-integrating veterans into the

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<sup>98</sup> N.M. Obodan (ed.), *Vozvrashchenie k trudovoi deiatel'nosti invalidov* (Leningrad, 1945). GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.974/l.277-9, l.289.

<sup>99</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.104/l.9.

<sup>100</sup> 'Trudovoe ustroistvo invalidov otechestvennoi voyny', in Obodan (ed.), *Vozvrashenie k trudovoi deiatel'nosti*, pp.5-7; Edele, 'A "Generation of Victors?"', p.136.

<sup>101</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.16, 1948, p.2; *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.22, 1948, pp.22-23; Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.92.

<sup>102</sup> Edele, 'A "Generation of Victors?"', p.136.

<sup>103</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1472/l.6; GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/l.4.

workplace. Nationally employment levels amongst war invalids increased steadily from 57.3 per cent in September 1942, to almost 80 per cent in January 1945 and reached 91.2 per cent in April 1948.<sup>104</sup> Moscow closely monitored these figures, and ranked cities and regions. In October 1945 Leningrad was ranked joint 31<sup>st</sup> and the Leningrad oblast 48<sup>th</sup> out of 54 places. 84.3 per cent of Leningrad's war invalids, and 77.7 per cent in the Leningrad oblast, were in employment or education.<sup>105</sup> Low rankings were disappointing for a major Soviet city and its rural hinterland, but perhaps understandable in a region struggling to recover from war's aftershocks. In future years employment rates were compared to average levels for the RSFSR. Intense criticism was directed at places falling below this benchmark.<sup>106</sup>

The city, oblast and district soviets closely monitored the *trudoustroistvo* of disabled veterans, and made it the subject of numerous resolutions. The reemployment of war invalids and able-bodied veterans was controlled by different institutions. The Ministry of Social Security, and its district offices, produced detailed plans for employing the war disabled, the implementation of which were constantly evaluated. Work placement commissions were established by district soviets to monitor the employment of disabled veterans and direct individuals towards suitable employment. In addition Leningrad's industrial employers had by June 1948 established a further 426 work placement commissions.<sup>107</sup> Major employers played a prominent part in hiring disabled veterans. By January 1946 the Kirov works was employing 442 disabled veterans out of a total workforce of 7694.<sup>108</sup> Of the 580 disabled veterans registered with the Kolpino district social security office in January 1946, 483 were employed at the Izhorskii factory.<sup>109</sup> Employers across the city and oblast' organized training courses to improve the skills and qualifications of disabled veterans.<sup>110</sup> These schemes seem to

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<sup>104</sup> Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy', p.49.

<sup>105</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7243/ll.1-3 (l.3).

<sup>106</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1472/ll.1-2 (l.1).

<sup>107</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.14, 1948, pp.1-4 (p.1).

<sup>108</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7753/l.39ob, 104ob. Two years later there were approximately the same number of disabled veterans working at the Kirov factory, 444 in total. TsGA-SPb/f.1788/op.34/d.128/ll.1-6 (l.1).

<sup>109</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/d.12/d.346/l.147.

<sup>110</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/ll.129-129ob, l.147, l.160; GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/l.11; GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.974/ll.211-211ob.

have been particularly important in enabling group II veterans to enter the workplace.<sup>111</sup> LIETIN in cooperation with the Leningrad Department of the Scientific Engineering-Technical Society (*Leningrad Otdeleniia Nauchnogo Inzhenerno-Tekhnicheskogo Obshchestva* –LONITO) undertook scientific studies of suitable jobs for disabled veterans on the railway network, in printing and publishing, in paper production and the textile industries.<sup>112</sup> While the infrastructure for re-employing most veterans had been dismantled by 1947, special assistance for reintegrating disabled veterans into the workplace was still in operation at the end of the decade.

As post-war reconstruction gathered pace levels of employment amongst disabled ex-soldiers gradually improved. This was the product of administrators gaining in experience, the implementation of new initiatives, the death of the most severely disabled veterans and the creation of new employment opportunities. 87.3 per cent of Leningrad's disabled veterans were working or studying by January 1947. This rose to 91 per cent by January 1949.<sup>113</sup> The improvement was achieved across all disability groups (Table 1). The economic mobilization of group III war invalids could be anticipated. But, increases in the number of group I and II war invalids, who by definition needed regular medical, assistance was more surprising.

The determination to turn severely disabled veterans into workers was not just about reducing the financial burden of disability pensions. Work served important functions for the war disabled. The Soviet Union, like other societies, stressed the curative qualities of work. In the correct circumstances “work-therapy” could teach disabled veterans how to become productive citizens and to build their physical strength.<sup>114</sup> As Cohen writes; “At work, a disabled man became self-reliant and fulfilled, secure in his sense of purpose.”<sup>115</sup> In a socialist society where work was considered to have a redemptive quality, work ensured the disabled soldier's reintegration into the community.

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<sup>111</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.117.

<sup>112</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.2-2/d.24, d.54, d.58 and d.59.

<sup>113</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.8230/ll.1-5(l.1), ll.6-8(l.6); GARF-RSFSR/f.A-431/op.1/d.1190/l.4.

<sup>114</sup> Jeffrey S. Reznik, ‘Work-Therapy and the Disabled British Soldier in Great Britain in the First World War: The Case of Shepherd's Bush Military Hospital, London’, in Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History*, pp.185-203.

<sup>115</sup> Deborah Cohen, ‘Will to Work: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany after the First World War’, in Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veteran in History*, pp.295-321 (p.301).

**Table 1: Percentage of Disabled veterans in employment or education by disability grouping.**

		Percentage of disabled veterans in employment or education		
Date	Place	Group I	Group II	Group III
January 1945	Leningrad oblast	9	49	96 <sup>116</sup>
June 1946	Leningrad	11.2	35.8	75.8 <sup>117</sup>
June 1948	Leningrad	23.4	61.3	99.8 <sup>118</sup>
January 1949	Leningrad oblast		58.7	98.4 <sup>119</sup>

Different forms of disability presented different challenges to resuming working lives. LIETIN, whose responsibility it was to research appropriate employment for disabled veterans, had difficulties finding work for the most seriously injured. The best that could be expected for many was repetitive home working.<sup>120</sup> The results of studies investigating jobs suitable for amputees who had lost an arm, the most common wartime injury, were not promising. In 1947 the suitability of 185 jobs were assessed on the Oktiabr'skaia railway line. Just sixteen were considered suitable, and a further seven could have provided employment in the right circumstances. These, however, were skilled or semi-skilled jobs with monthly salaries between 340 to 750 roubles.<sup>121</sup> Of 240 jobs examined in the textile industry only 22 were suitable.<sup>122</sup> However, demand for all of these positions was limited. Veterans with serious or multiple injuries found it harder to find suitable employment. Little provision was made for adapting workplaces to disabled people's needs. Given the shortage of materials and tools in workplaces it was hardly surprising that special adaptive technology was rarely installed. Even the acquisition of a swivel chair was celebrated as a special event. Universal provision of adaptive technology was little more than a utopian dream.<sup>123</sup> Even those industrial enterprises which took work placement seriously, such as the Kirov, Stalin and Karl

<sup>116</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.2, 1945, p.6; *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.4, 1945, pp.16-17.

<sup>117</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.46/l.7.

<sup>118</sup> *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.14, 1948, pp.1-4 (p.1).

<sup>119</sup> *Biulleten' Lenobispolkoma*, No.11, 1949, pp.16-17 (p.16).

<sup>120</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.2554/op.2/d.487/l.1ob.

<sup>121</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.2-2/d.54/l.1-5, 87, 89, 91-93, 95-116.

<sup>122</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.2-2/d.59/l.3.

<sup>123</sup> Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy', pp.54-55.

Marx factories, did not consistently make the most of disabled veterans' skills. A study conducted at the Kirov factory revealed that 28.7 per cent of disabled workers complained about the difficulties created by inappropriate work.<sup>124</sup>

Blind veterans, in particular, suffered from a lack of awareness about their particular needs. Officials and wider society rarely understood their capabilities. One national initiative, implemented in Leningrad, aimed to train blind veterans as musicians.<sup>125</sup> By the beginning of 1946 there were 63 blind veterans training at a residential musical college located in the Dzerzhinskii district.<sup>126</sup> By 1947 there were 113 veteran students at the college, and approximately 100 in 1948 and 1949.<sup>127</sup> The college, however, was unable to provide its students with sustainable musical careers. In November 1945 a delegate at a conference discussing the employment of blind veterans, with experience of working with blind people in pre-war Leningrad, described musical retraining as "the crudest of mistakes" and a "catastrophe" waiting to happen. Few blind veterans, even after extensive training, were capable of becoming professional musicians.<sup>128</sup> In the 1948-49 academic year sixteen blind veterans graduated with good or excellent results, but six failed to qualify.<sup>129</sup> Even successful graduates could not be guaranteed a musical career. Shortages of musical instruments threatened the whole scheme.<sup>130</sup>

In one oral history interview a veteran told me the story of a much-loved family friend who had been blinded at the front. The blind veteran found work in a co-operative for other blind veterans doing tedious manual tasks in a workshop located in an unlit basement. Left alone in the dark with little mental stimulation, members of the cooperative spent much of their time at work playing chess in their heads. Imagining the

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<sup>124</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.8230/ll.1-2.

<sup>125</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.314.

<sup>126</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.384/l.22.

<sup>127</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.974/l.210, GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/l.12.

<sup>128</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8009/op.35/d.20/ll.1-6 (l.3).

<sup>129</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/ll.12-13.

<sup>130</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R.7523/op.55/d.13/l.4.



board and pieces in their minds, a game could be begun or resumed at any moment, a situation that frustrated the cooperative's bosses.<sup>131</sup>

Training schemes for the war disabled routinely ignored veterans' real needs and physical capabilities. Those who could not be employed in the regular economy were often trained in craft or artisan trades, and were employed in invalids' cooperatives.<sup>132</sup> There were national schemes to retrain war invalids as photographers, cinema projectionists or accounts clerks. In Leningrad disabled veterans were more commonly trained as cobblers, tailors or as mechanics repairing typewriters and adding machines.<sup>133</sup> State-funded training initiatives were poorly funded, resourced and planned. In April and May 1946 *Leningradskaja pravda* published collective letters from groups of disabled veterans, complaining that retraining of the war-disabled was not taken seriously. Veterans enrolled on training courses were sometimes left to sit idle for want of materials, tools and proper work. A large group of trainee tailors had just two broken sewing machines to train on. Workshops were hidden away in cold, dark and damp basements.<sup>134</sup> Another workshop was organized on the third floor of a building, making it inaccessible to veterans on crutches and prosthetic limbs. As the signatories put it: "One feels the inattention to our needs literally at every step."<sup>135</sup>

A number of disabled veterans who had returned to Leningrad before either the end of the war or mass demobilization found work relatively easily, because of wartime labour shortages. But, as time passed and "healthy" veterans returned to the city many war invalids found that that they were muscled out of their jobs. Employers preferred to hire able-bodied workers, as disabled veterans of the First World War had found.<sup>136</sup> Although the state could place employers under great pressure to employ the war disabled, industrial managers still had to ensure the production plan was fulfilled.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview, 21 March 2008, Disc No.10.

<sup>132</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/2v/d.8230/1.4.

<sup>133</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.974/1.210; TsGAIPD-SPb/K.-598/op.6/d.113/1l.87-88 (1.87).

<sup>134</sup> 'Pomosh' invalidam voyny ovladet' novoi spetsial'nost'iu (po pis'mam redaktsiiu)', *Leningradskaja pravda*, 16 April 1946, p.3; 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – Navesti poriadok v skole invalidov', *Leningradskaja pravda*, 23 May 1946, p.3.

<sup>135</sup> 'Pis'ma v redaktsiiu – Tak li nado obuchat' invalidov', *Leningradskaja pravda*, 19 September 1946, p.3.

<sup>136</sup> Cohen, 'Will to Work', pp.302-3.

Nobody wanted to hire unproductive workers who posed a potential danger to themselves, their colleagues and valuable machinery.

Instances of war invalids being dismissed from their jobs, with little justification, began in Leningrad as early as 1945. A report from the Dzerzhinskii district *voenkomat* revealed a tendency for managers to dismiss disabled people. Fadeev had worked as a fire-watcher for a construction trust for approximately four months, before being replaced by an able-bodied worker. Sudakov, a group II war invalid, was replaced in his job as a buffet manager. He was eventually reinstated after the intervention of the district social security office.<sup>137</sup> In July 1946 another group II disabled veteran and his wife were expelled from a collective farm in the Volkhovskii district of the Leningrad oblast. Thanks to the intervention of the district procuracy the couple were reinstated.<sup>138</sup> Similar situations were by no means uncommon.<sup>139</sup> In late 1947 the All-Union Ministry of Social Security observed numerous instances of war invalids being dismissed from their employment.<sup>140</sup>

Most of these examples appear in the archival record when prosecutors, courts or social security officials intervened to reinstate disabled veterans. How many veterans accepted their dismissal with resignation or indifference without coming into contact with state agencies is impossible to know. Where disabled veterans excluded from the workplace were mentioned in reports they said little about the resentment and alienation proud ex-servicemen, injured whilst defending their country, inevitably felt. Yet a petition sent to Sovnarkom on 3 February 1946 by a former engineer, communist party-member and war invalid from Leningrad captured this sense of bitterness and confusion. Released from the army as a group II invalid the petitioner held a number of positions of responsibility in industry and agriculture before returning to Leningrad in 1944. He was appointed director of a motor vehicle pool. In January 1946, after having been away from the city on business, he was informed that he had been demoted and replaced by a recently demobilized soldier. He sought an explanation for this injustice:

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<sup>137</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/l.117.

<sup>138</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.3/d.67/l.276; LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.104/l.15.

<sup>139</sup> See for example GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1190/l.9; GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1472/l.7-8.

<sup>140</sup> Fieseler, 'The Bitter Legacy', p.52.

“I am now asking for an explanation for what reason I have been removed from my position. Why have I been dismissed? Is a man in this country really worth so little that he can be mocked for no reason?”<sup>141</sup>

The re-employment of disabled veterans was presented as a remarkable success by both state propaganda and official reports. The local and national press celebrated the achievements of disabled veterans in the workplace, surrounding disabled veterans with the same discourse as their able-bodied comrades.<sup>142</sup> War-invalids were exhorted to become exemplary workers and to achieve spectacular feats of Stakhanovism. According to Dunham the press campaign encouraged, “something like a movement of Voropaevism,” a form of disabled veterans’ Stakhanovism inspired by the boundless energy of Voropaev, the fictional hero of the post-war novel, *Happiness*.<sup>143</sup> Local equivalents were singled out for praise. Mikhail Ivanov, a metal lathe operator at Elektrosila, was the epitome of this active community-conscious war invalid. In the first half of March 1946 he fulfilled his production norm for machining precision components by 455 per cent. In addition he was head of the factory *Osoaviakhim* branch, and an active candidate party member.<sup>144</sup> Reports of disabled veterans returning to work and taking a full part in production were no doubt intended to reassure others about their place in society. In October 1945 Leningrad’s social security administration forwarded a report to Moscow, which claimed that 12 per cent of war invalids employed in the city worked in managerial roles, 74.9 per cent in skilled positions and 13.1 per cent in non-skilled positions, mainly in bakeries, canteens or chocolate factories.<sup>145</sup> Statistics gathered in individual districts gave a similar impression.<sup>146</sup>

The official version of the re-employment of Leningrad’s disabled veterans sits uncomfortably alongside the popular myths of street clearance and Valaam. If Leningrad’s social security officials and employers were so effective at reintegrating disabled veterans, why were war invalids begging on street corners, railway stations and other public spaces? What were the basis of rumours about unproductive war-invalids

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<sup>141</sup> Quoted in Fieseler, ‘The Bitter Legacy’, p.52.

<sup>142</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.96; Burton, ‘Medical Welfare’, pp.272-73.

<sup>143</sup> Pavlenko, *Happiness*; Dunham, ‘Images of the Disabled’, p.153.

<sup>144</sup> ‘V trude, kak v boiu’, *Elektrosila*, 2 April 1946, p.1. ‘Trudovoe ustroistvo invalidov’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 19 June 1946, p.2.

<sup>145</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.650/11.31-54 (1.43). Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.96, 99.

<sup>146</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.346/1.160.

being cleared from the streets and exiled to isolated locations such as Valaam if disabled veterans were so successfully employed? Clearly there was a gulf between official statements about care and attention for disabled veterans, and individuals' experience. The boundaries between propaganda rhetoric and reported information were not always clear. Just as disability classifications failed to reflect the physical and psychological impact of war upon soldiers, official statistics and pronouncements poorly reflected war invalids' social position.

### **Medical Assistance**

Leningrad was one of the most important medical centers in the Soviet Union. The city was home to major hospitals, medical research institutes and teaching institutions, pharmaceutical factories and prosthetics workshops. Here, perhaps more than any other Soviet city, disabled veterans expected to receive good medical care. Detailed plans to provide Leningrad's war invalids with the best of care were drawn up. There was, in theory, a dedicated doctor in every *raion* responsible for registering war invalids and overseeing their treatment. District nurses were also made responsible for visiting war invalids at home, and acting as liaison between polyclinics, hospitals, social security offices and other organizations.<sup>147</sup> At least 1000 hospital beds were earmarked for treating disabled veterans. Medical research institutes were to assist in treating difficult cases.<sup>148</sup> Special surgeries were to be created to exclusively serve the war disabled. Each district was to establish a specially-equipped polyclinic to offer treatment to disabled veterans. Health centres were to be organized at large workplaces where the war disabled would be given priority treatment and specialist treatment.<sup>149</sup>

Plans to organize medical care for disabled veterans, just like the project to create a central hospital in Leningrad, were drawn up in a bureaucratic bubble detached from the realities of life in a war ravaged city. Medical infrastructure, like everything else, had been extensively damaged. According to one estimate seventy-eight per cent of Leningrad's hospitals were "knocked out of commission" during the siege.<sup>150</sup> 193

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<sup>147</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.488/1.91.

<sup>148</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/1.18.

<sup>149</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/1.35. *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta* No.18, 1948, p.18.

<sup>150</sup> Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege* p.122.

medical institutions were damaged or destroyed in the Leningrad oblast.<sup>151</sup>

Approximately ninety per cent of the sanatoria network on the Baltic coast around Sestoretsk and Zelenogorsk were destroyed.<sup>152</sup> The estimated cost of repairing the damage to medical institutions in the City and Oblast together exceeded one hundred million roubles.<sup>153</sup> From 1944 onwards great efforts were made to rebuild the healthcare system in and around Leningrad.<sup>154</sup> According to Professor Mashanskii virtually all medical institutions which had not been totally destroyed had been put in order by January 1946.<sup>155</sup> In reality the reconstruction of clinics and hospitals, like the rebuilding of housing, factories and basic infrastructure, would take several more years. According to Vakser it was not until 1950 that the number of hospitals, total number of beds and number of doctors per 10,000 citizens approached pre-war levels.<sup>156</sup>

Reconstruction did not necessarily result in improving healthcare standards. Across the Soviet Union medical facilities were poorly equipped, faced chronic shortages of drugs, medical supplies and trained staff. Although the lack of resources was most crippling in rural areas, the standard of care in large cities was often abysmal.<sup>157</sup> Between 1941 and 1945 the Soviet Union relied heavily upon American imports of basic medicines, such as aspirin, codeine and sulphanilamides. Emerging Cold War tensions ended American support. The result was a national shortage of essentials such as glucose, boric acid, castor oil and painkillers. There were shortages of almost all basic materials and equipment; including soap, syringes, needles and other instruments.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7177/l.3.

<sup>152</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.36/l.15.

<sup>153</sup> Biakina, *Vosstanovlenie i razvitie zdavookhraneniia*, pp.81-82.

<sup>154</sup> Biakina, *Vosstanovlenie i razvitie zdavookhraneniia*, pp.61-62.

<sup>155</sup> 'Zabota o zdorovyie Leningradstev', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 7 January 1946, p.2.

<sup>156</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, pp.103-4. For more detail on pre-war levels of medical provision see Nadezhda Cherepenina, 'The Demographic Situation and Healthcare on the Eve of the War', in Barber and Dzeniskevich (ed.), *Life and Death*, pp.13-27 (p.18).

<sup>157</sup> For a comparison with Moscow see Greta Bucher, *Women the Bureaucracy and Daily Life in Postwar Moscow, 1945-1953* (Boulder, CO.: East European Monographs, 2006), pp.137-73; Greta Bucher, "Free and Worth Every Kopeck" Soviet Medicine and Women in Postwar Russia', in William B. Husband (ed.), *The Human Tradition in Modern Russia* (Wilmington, DE.: Scholarly Resources, 2000), pp.175-85.

<sup>158</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, pp.100-15 (p.108); Mary Schaeffer Conroy, 'The Soviet Pharmaceutical Industry and Dispensing, 1945-1953', *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol.56, No.7 (November 2004), pp.963-91 (pp.965-66).

Neither were many medical professionals highly trained specialists with years of medical training behind them. Many surgeons, doctors and nurses acquired their training in a 'hands-on' fashion on the frontlines. As Burton has argued the post-war programme of assessing doctors' and surgeons' qualifications revealed low levels of medical competence, and the need for remedial training.<sup>159</sup> Dealing with large numbers of amputations and ballistic injuries gave many doctors and nurses valuable experience, but hastily trained staff were not always equipped for civilian practice. There was a difference between patching up injured soldiers on the battlefield and diagnosing illness and disease in a clinical setting. Contrary to the view that the late Stalinist health service worked well, an argument sometimes offered by nostalgic veterans, medicine was a low priority.

On 20 July 1946 a Sovnarkom resolution approved the Leningrad city soviet's request to establish a new hospital for Great Patriotic War invalids.<sup>160</sup> In August the local press celebrated the hospital's imminent opening. The facility was envisaged as one of the largest institutions devoted to the care and treatment of disabled veterans in the Soviet Union. It was to boast the very latest Soviet technology, and to have brand new surgical, orthopaedic, neurosurgical, maxillofacial and tubercular wards.<sup>161</sup> The hospital was to be located on the Fontanka, in the grand neo-classical buildings of the former Catherine Institute. This placed the hospital at the very heart of the city, just a few hundred meters from the Anchikov bridge and Nevskii prospect. Today the imposing building houses the newspaper collection of the National Library of Russia. In many ways this hospital's history was a microcosm of the provision of medical services for Leningrad's disabled veterans. The project was characterized by grand ambitions and lofty goals, as well as delays, inadequate funding, material shortages and disappointments; factors which characterized the treatment of Leningrad's disabled veterans more generally.

A crumbling early nineteenth-century palace was hardly a suitable place for a prestigious rehabilitative institution. Prior to August 1946 the building had housed

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<sup>159</sup> Christopher Burton, 'Soviet Medical Attestation and the Problems of Professionalization under Late Stalinism, 1945-1953', *Europe Asia Studies*, Vol.57, No.8 (December 2005), pp.1211-29 (pp.1216-18).

<sup>160</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.488/1.75, 96.

<sup>161</sup> 'Novyi gosptal' dlia invalidov voini', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 11 August 1946, p.3.

evacuation hospital number 2012. Staff demobilized from the military medical service were recruited to work for the new civilian institution.<sup>162</sup> Much of the building was in a state of disrepair. It was not a suitable building to provide the first-rate care described in the press. In mid October 1946, six weeks after the building had been transferred to the new hospital, its new director Nikolai Shatalov submitted an angry report to the head of Leningrad's Health Department, Professor Mashanskii. Shatalov described the condition of the building as "catastrophic". The roof was so badly damaged that water was leaking through to the ground floor. Only half of the windows were glazed. Shortages of plywood meant that unglazed windows were not boarded up. The building's plumbing and heating systems had not been repaired. The lack of running water was a serious problem for a building intended to have surgical wards and in which hygiene should have been a priority.<sup>163</sup> Despite Shatalov's demands for immediate improvements the hospital was not fully operational for months. In November 1946 a hospital for scarlet fever patients was temporarily organized in the building.<sup>164</sup> It took another year before the planned 750 beds for disabled veterans were in regular use. In 1950 the building passed to the public library. The hospital moved from its central location to a purpose-built building in the Nevskii district, on the edge of the city.<sup>165</sup>

Abysmal conditions were not unusual. Stories of an isolated colony on Valaam were plausible because other isolated residential homes for seriously disabled veterans, without families or friends to support them, were established in the Leningrad oblast. According to official plans 1275 residential places for disabled veterans should have been established by 1945. By January 1946 only 657 places were made available.<sup>166</sup> A year later the number of places had barely increased.<sup>167</sup> Condition in these *dom invalidov* were reminiscent of those on Valaam. In January 1946 a conference of directors of these institutions met to discuss the heartless treatment of disabled veterans in their care.<sup>168</sup> *Doma invalidov* were dirty, cold and dark, and in need of urgent repair. They resembled

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<sup>162</sup> E.M. Ageenko (ed.), *Sankt-Peterburgskii gospiatal veteranov voin k 55 letiiu so dnia osnovaniia (1946-2001)* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatelstvo RGPU imeni A.I. Gertsena, 2001), p.7, 41.

<sup>163</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.488/l.73.

<sup>164</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.488/l.97.

<sup>165</sup> Agennko (ed.), *Sankt-Peterburgskii gospiatal veteranov voin*, p.7.

<sup>166</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/l.5ob.

<sup>167</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-413/op.1/d.1001/l.45

<sup>168</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/l.2-75.

dumping grounds for vulnerable individuals on the margins of society, rather than therapeutic institutions. Bedding and clothing were rarely washed or changed. There were shortages of the most basic medical supplies, such as iodine and pain killers. Few had sufficient staff to care for residents.<sup>169</sup> Soboleva, head of the oblast Social Security administration, described conditions as follows:

“People don’t live in human conditions, but in cattle-like (*skotskii*) conditions; and everyone an invalid of the Patriotic War. I assure you comrades that even in the most difficult times of the blockade troops living in dugouts on the Leningrad front didn’t live in such conditions as they now live, since they became invalids.”<sup>170</sup>

There were also allegations that the directors of some of the region’s residential homes had been dismissed and prosecuted for embezzling funds intended for the care of disabled residents.<sup>171</sup> Soboleva and other delegates repeatedly reminded directors of their responsibilities towards ‘living people’ in their care.<sup>172</sup> The attitude of staff to vulnerable disabled veterans was shocking. War invalids were treated with suspicion, as little better than thieves rather than as people who spilt their blood defending the nation. A callous and uncaring attitude was endemic. Soboleva reminded delegates that just because a veteran had lost a leg did not mean that they were different from other people. Such attitudes only reinforced disabled veterans’ anxieties about their place in society. She counselled patience and understanding: “We must understand in them (war invalids) their feeling of worthlessness, in order that they may feel themselves to be useful members of society, rather than parasites.”<sup>173</sup> Her enraged pleas were heartfelt, but had little impact in a society in which disability was stigmatized.

The same accusations of neglecting disabled veterans’ real needs were made against officials in the prosthetics industry. Inattentive members of staff were accused of making basic errors including producing limbs that were too short, issuing right arms instead of left arms, or glass eyes that did not match the other eye’s colour. Another veteran wrote to *Leningradskaiia pravda* about inattentive technicians and medical staff.

“The employees of the factory have forgotten that they are dealing with living people, and are only concerned with somehow knocking together a

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<sup>169</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/l.6ob.

<sup>170</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/l.42.

<sup>171</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/ll.7ob-9.

<sup>172</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/l.7ob.

<sup>173</sup> LOGAV/f.R-2798/op.1/d.65/ll.41-44ob (l.44).



prosthesis. Whether it is suitable for him, or whether the invalid is able to walk on it, little interests them. The limb prepared for me was significantly longer than it needed to be. The fitting is too wide. But it would have been easy to avoid it while I was being measured the technician and doctor had paid the necessary attention.”<sup>174</sup>

Such problems were not uniquely Soviet. In Britain in 1945 there were severe delays in supplying artificial limbs. It could take over three months for an artificial leg to be supplied.<sup>175</sup> Modern warfare’s capacity to injure has rarely matched medicine’s ability to treat veterans.

Soviet prosthetic limbs were heavy, lacked durability and required regular maintenance and replacement. Complaints about their quality were frequently printed in the national and local press.<sup>176</sup> In June 1946, for example, the editorial office of *Leningradskaia pravda* conducted a raid of the city’s prosthetics industry and invited proposals for improvements.<sup>177</sup> Leningrad’s prosthetics’ research institute was accused by official investigations of ignoring to fit and balance limbs.

“Because of the foolish use of prosthetics and bad fitting of prosthetics to stumps invalids often receive injuries and lose blood even within the institute’s clinic, which could lead to repeat operations, further shortening of limbs, lengthy periods of hospitalization and which arouse justified complaints about heartless treatment amongst patients.”<sup>178</sup>

Amputees found wearing artificial limbs extremely painful. Grimachev, a veteran employed at the Kirov factory, found the discomfort of his artificial legs more exhausting than his work.<sup>179</sup> The crude design of artificial limbs affected all people with disabilities, but Leningrad’s veterans expected better. Prosthetics were not just about applying modern technology to damaged bodies in order to create the new Soviet person. Nor were they about the best interests of the individual. Their purpose was to make the injuries of war invisible. Just as in Britain after the First World War;

<sup>174</sup> ‘Spravedlivye trebovaniia (obzor pisem)’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 18 July 1946, p.3.

<sup>175</sup> Bourke, ‘Going Home’, p.150.

<sup>176</sup> Fieseler, ‘The Bitter Legacy’, p.54; ‘Vsemerno pomogat proizvodstvu protezov’, *Trud*, 19 April 1946, p.3; ‘Ob’edinit’ delo protezirovaniia’, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 21 August 1948, p.2; ‘Eshche raz o protezirovanii’, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 11 September 1948, p.2.

<sup>177</sup> ‘Soveshchanie po voprosy o protezirovanii’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 18 June 1946, p.4.

<sup>178</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7017/l.12-14 (l.12ob).

<sup>179</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.53/l.1ob; ‘Spravedlivye trebovaniia (obzor pisem)’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 18 July 1946, p.3.

“Prosthetics were intended to make it possible for those who wore them and those who saw them to forget the trauma of amputation.”<sup>180</sup> Prosthetics were intended to suppress the memories of war prompted by empty sleeves, eye patches or crutches, and protecting late Stalinist society’s squeamish aesthetic sensibilities.<sup>181</sup> With post-war society retreating into a cosy domestic world of rubber plants, pink-lampshades, waxed parquet floors and net curtains, as Vera Dunham argued, there was little room for deformed and mutilated bodies.<sup>182</sup>

By August 1945 there were 19,486 disabled veterans registered with Leningrad’s polyclinics. 11,766 were actively receiving medical treatment. Over 15,000 were receiving special ration packs.<sup>183</sup> The number grew rapidly. By mid June 1946 the social security officials had record of 48,667 war invalids in Leningrad. 33,511 of these were registered with polyclinics. 20,241 required surgery.<sup>184</sup> Between January and November 1946 war invalids made 145,887 visits to polyclinics. Approximately 22,055 physiotherapy consultations had taken place in polyclinics. 3528 disabled veterans had been hospitalized, spending on average between 30 and 90 days on the wards. Hospitals conducted 2796 operations and 39,026 physiotherapy sessions with disabled veterans.<sup>185</sup> Many amputees required further operations to neaten their stumps, or to stop the spread of infection. Shrapnel and bullet wounds had a tendency to reopen and required regular sterilization and redressing. Veterans paralyzed by spinal or brain injuries required full-time care for the rest of their lives. Tens of thousands of veterans needed prosthetic limbs, customized shoes, artificial eyes, hearing aids, crutches and walking sticks. Disabled veterans represented a major drain on local medical resources.

Leningrad’s war invalids could not rely on being at the front of the queue for medical care. Even when their needs were prioritized or were the product of special initiatives treatment was inadequate. Official documents reveal that polyclinics, doctors’

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<sup>180</sup> Koven, ‘Remembering and Dismemberment’, p.1195.

<sup>181</sup> On the role of aesthetics in the Stalinist political project see Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*, trans. by Charles Rougle (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1992); David Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.11.

<sup>182</sup> Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time*.

<sup>183</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/l.19.

<sup>184</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/l.44.

<sup>185</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.488/l.94-95.

surgeries and other clinics often failed to provide disabled veterans with basic care.<sup>186</sup> Some housebound group I invalids were visited by social security officials or nurses less than once a month. Other disabled veterans were asked to pay for their medication.<sup>187</sup> On 15 May 1946 members of the executive committee of the Leningrad soviet discussed progress in the treatment of war invalids. Approximately 850 beds had been earmarked for disabled veterans in ten different institutions. Delegates complained that this was inadequate for treating tens of thousands of war invalids. Bed turnover was extremely slow, since many patients required treatments exceeding three months. One delegate complained that patients refused to leave hospital. 100 heavily injured group II and III war invalids, who were not native Leningraders, were transferred from military hospitals to civilian hospitals in the city. They refused to leave hospital, despite having finished their treatment, until they were issued with prosthetic limbs, crutches or walking sticks.<sup>188</sup> Other delegates feared that the lifting of restrictions on entry to the city in the summer of 1946 would attract a further influx of disabled veterans, and increase the strain on medical services.<sup>189</sup> In 1947 a similar meeting of the city soviet executive committee acknowledged that; “The influx of invalids into Leningrad is a serious problem.”<sup>190</sup>

The demand for medical care would have been significantly higher if all those veterans requiring treatment had sought it. A report from June 1946 estimated that only fifteen to twenty per cent of disabled veterans were actually receiving treatment.<sup>191</sup> Propaganda and educational work was suggested as a means of encouraging disabled veterans to seek treatment. The executive committee of the Pargolovskii district soviet recommended that the district newspaper *Leninskoe slovo* reported on the treatment and retraining of disabled veterans.<sup>192</sup> *Vechernii Leningrad* published several articles reporting remarkable improvement in surgery, and stories of veterans recovering their

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<sup>186</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.36/l.1; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.242/l.1-2.

<sup>187</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta*, No.18, 1948, p.18; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.242/l.2.

<sup>188</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.36/l.2,3,5,11.

<sup>189</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.36/l.18.

<sup>190</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.242/l.4.

<sup>191</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.420/l.44.

<sup>192</sup> LOGAV/f.R-407/op.1/d.246/l.85ob-86.

health after successful operations.<sup>193</sup> These were intended to reassure veterans about the quality of care and the ways surgery could transform their lives. However, the brutality of wartime military medicine, when amputations were routinely conducted without anesthetics, hardly reassured veterans about civilian medicine. The filth, endemic shortages and humiliations of hospital life were also an important deterrent. Few patients with any choice opted to stay in hospital. There were reports of in-patients fleeing the wards, and even people with head injuries refusing surgery.<sup>194</sup> Some health officials, however, had other explanations. In May 1947 Professor Mashinskii expressed concern that disabled veterans were deliberately avoiding treatment, because they feared that medical treatment might improve their condition sufficiently to endanger their pensions and other privileges.<sup>195</sup> This was not a realistic motive. But it does highlight that even officials responsible for improving medical provision, considered war invalids to be shirkers sponging off the state.

### **Psychological Trauma**

Late Stalinist society tended to treat war's injuries as purely physical. The typical image of Great Patriotic War invalids in propaganda and archival sources is that of a male amputee who had lost one, perhaps two limbs. As Krylova writes; "Circumscribed within the limits of a physiological paradigm the party press presented the war legacy as readily remedied by means of reconstructive surgery and high-quality false limbs."<sup>196</sup> Amputation, of course, was the most common reason for disability amongst veterans, but the cost of war was more complicated. Red Army soldiers suffered virtually every conceivable form of injury and illness, including blindness, deafness, disfigurement and mental trauma. Historians of Soviet Second World War veterans, however, have tended to echo the official discourse and equate war's disabling effects with physical disability. Edele and Fieseler, for example, both concentrate upon the damage done to ex-servicemen's bodies, and the social and economic effects physical disability had on their future lives. They have little to say about damaging psychological effects of modern warfare, and the ways that war traumas shaped veterans' post-war lives. In part this is a reflection of the archival record. Official

<sup>193</sup> 'Chelovek vstal na nogi', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 1 February 1946, p.2; 'Vozrashchenie k trudu. Vidaiushchiesiaspeckhi khirurgov', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 2 October 1946, p.2.

<sup>194</sup> Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone. Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000), p.305.

<sup>195</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.25/d.242/l.12.

<sup>196</sup> Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls'", p.316.

sources were primarily concerned about physical disability, and had little to say about the possible mental damage caused by exposure to mass killing and extreme violence. By concentrating on war invalids' interaction with employers, pensioning bodies and welfare organisation much of the existing historiography replicates the Stalinist regime's own restrictive definition of disability. Just as the disability classification system underestimated the true extent of physical disability; it gave little recognition to the enormous psychological cost of modern industrialized warfare.

Few historians, with the notable exception of Merridale, have questioned how far Soviet veterans were affected by the horrific things they experienced. Seniavskaia's ground-breaking research into *frontoviki's* psychology has little to say about the traumatic effects of combat, perhaps not surprising given her patriotic stance.<sup>197</sup> Seniavskaia suggests that the "frontline generation" found the war largely a positive experience. Extreme situations created strong characters capable of independent decisions and a freethinking attitude towards the Stalinist state, rather than personalities traumatised by violence and mass death.<sup>198</sup> Even important recent research on Soviet military psychiatry, written by specialists in this field, has done little to prompt interest into post-war trauma amongst Soviet veterans.<sup>199</sup> Since historians of demobilization have proved so reluctant to approach these complicated issues, the old Soviet myth that the Red Army was immune to the psychological and psychiatric problems that affected other armies and societies has been established by default. Much of the existing literature continues to stereotype veterans as either the positive heroes of Soviet propaganda, or as faceless unthinking brutes, who lacked the emotional and moral makeup of western soldiers, an image peddled in the west during the Cold War.

The lack of research about the traumatic effects of the Great Patriotic War on Soviet veterans contrasts dramatically with the scholarship of other twentieth-century veterans. In recent years cultural historians of warfare have become obsessed with trauma. The traumatic effects of combat upon soldiers of modern twentieth-century warfare are the subject of a vast and ever expanding literature. Historians continue to be fascinated by the study of war-neuroses, shell-shock, combat fatigue, post-traumatic

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<sup>197</sup> Seniavskaia, *Frontovoe pokolenie*; also, *Psikhologiya voina v XX veke. Istoricheskoi opyt Rossii* (Moscow: ROSEN, 1999).

<sup>198</sup> Seniavskaia, *Frontovoe pokolenie*, p.89; idem., *Psikhologiya voina*, pp.184-86.

<sup>199</sup> Albert R. Gilgen et. al., *Soviet and American Psychology During World War II* (Wesport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1997); Paul Wanke, *Russian/Soviet Military Psychiatry, 1904-1945* (London, New York: Frank Cass, 2005).

stress disorder and military psychiatry. Much has been written about the psychiatric casualties of both World Wars and the Vietnam War. However, the idea that all soldiers were irreparably scarred by their wartime experiences has increasingly been questioned. As Bourke argues; “The emphasis on emotional breakdown and psychiatric illness has obscured the fact that most men coped remarkably well with the demands being made upon them in wartime.”<sup>200</sup> Despite these important reservations the idea that modern warfare was inherently traumatic has entered the western cultural mainstream. The coining of the term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the mid 1970s has labelled any event outside the range of usual human experience, which could be considered markedly distressing to almost anyone, as potentially traumatic. Indeed, in modern usage the word “trauma” has become detached from its original meanings, and is applied to almost any uncomfortable or disquieting experience.

War trauma requires careful treatment. As Ben Shephard argues, every war is different. Each and every conflict is a unique confluence of social, cultural, economic, political, military and medical factors, which affect how war trauma is diagnosed and treated. Different social attitudes to fear, madness and social obligation all influenced the role of military psychology and even the symptoms diagnosed.<sup>201</sup> Consequently research which tries to anachronistically apply the symptoms of PTSD to civilians or combatants in World War II, as Förster and Beck attempt, is fraught with methodological problems.<sup>202</sup> Assumptions about the universality of war trauma should be guarded against. Although virtually every Soviet citizen experienced anguish, fear, shock, depression and exhaustion during and after the war, this was not the same as genuine psychological disorder.<sup>203</sup>

Culture, as Merridale has so persuasively argued, has a major role to play in the identification and treatment of war trauma, and even the individual’s willingness to seek help. Different societies respond to trauma in different ways. Russian and Soviet responses to trauma illustrate this point particularly clearly. Attitudes towards trauma

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<sup>200</sup> Joanna Bourke, ‘Effeminacy, Ethnicity, and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.35, No.1 (January 2000), pp.57-69 (p.57); Todman, *The Great War*, p.47.

<sup>201</sup> Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, xxii.

<sup>202</sup> Alice Förster and Birgit Beck, ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and World War II. Can a Psychiatric Concept Help Us Understand Postwar Society?’ in Bessel and Schumann (eds), *Life After Death*, pp.15-35.

<sup>203</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, p.315.

have changed over time. While ideas about the psychological origin of shell-shock briefly held sway in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by the end of the 1920s Soviet society had developed very different attitudes towards individual trauma.<sup>204</sup> By the start of the Great Patriotic War the myth that Soviet, and Russian soldiers in particular, were immune from the war neuroses which plagued the decadent bourgeois west was firmly established. It was believed that Russian culture offered a superior framework for dealing with extreme events. The myth was that almost all Russians survived the war without suffering crippling mental trauma.<sup>205</sup> The image of the stoic hero has proved as immovable as the gigantic war monuments that immortalised these ideas in stone and bronze. Undoubtedly, the sense that soldiers had been engaged in a collective battle for survival had a role in minimising trauma. But the minds of Red Army soldiers were no more immune to psychiatric damage than their bodies were immune from shells and bullets. In serving their country Soviet soldiers had to be prepared to not only sacrifice life and limb, but also their nerves.

Although there was little official recognition of war's psychological effects in the first five years after 1945, or for that matter in subsequent decades, Soviet soldiers did suffer psychological and psychiatric difficulties before and after their demobilization. Towards the war's end, Soviet psychiatrists found themselves overwhelmed by war-related trauma and unequipped to deal with them.<sup>206</sup> According to Gabriel approximately 100,000 active soldiers eventually became permanent psychiatric casualties.<sup>207</sup> Yet as Wanke argues the number of neuropsychiatric casualties was almost certainly grossly under-estimated. Only soldiers who reached treatment centres had the opportunity for diagnosis. Many soldiers already broken by trauma would have been killed in the frontline carnage, or even executed under the notorious Order No.227.<sup>208</sup>

The disparity in the levels of mental trauma in the Red Army and its allies are worth noting. In some combat theatres approximately one third of British servicemen

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<sup>204</sup> Merridale, 'The Collective Mind', pp.39-40.

<sup>205</sup> Merridale, 'The Collective Mind', pp.47-48.

<sup>206</sup> Krylova, "'Healers of Wounded Souls'", p.317.

<sup>207</sup> Richard A. Gabriel, *Soviet Military Psychiatry. The Theory and Practice of Coping with Battle Stress* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p.47.

<sup>208</sup> Wanke, *Russian/Soviet Military Psychiatry*, pp.67-68.

evacuated from the frontlines were suffering from mental trauma.<sup>209</sup> According to other estimates between twenty to fifty per cent of British casualties sustained between 1939-45 were psychiatric.<sup>210</sup> In America, where follow up studies of veterans were at their most sophisticated, there were 475,397 patients with neuropsychiatric disabilities claiming pensions from the Veterans Administration (VA) by 1947. In addition by 1945 there were 50,662 World War II veterans with neuropsychiatric disorders in VA hospitals.<sup>211</sup> The estimated level of Soviet psychiatric casualties was so low it suggests that only acute mental illness such as schizophrenia was accepted as genuinely disabling.<sup>212</sup> Only one percent of veterans passing through Leningrad's VTEKi between July 1945 and June 1946 were diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities.<sup>213</sup> In 1946 just 3670 soldiers and former soldiers underwent psychiatric assessment.<sup>214</sup>

The evidence that Leningrad's veterans suffered traumatic reactions as a result of their wartime service is abundant. Trauma was much closer to the surface in Leningrad than any other Soviet city. There was no shortage of triggers for traumatic memory amidst the rubble. Veterans settling in Leningrad were rejoining a community with its own claims to have been traumatized by the horrors of total warfare. The blockade had generated its own forms of nervous reaction. In 1948 a group of Leningrad doctors observed a phenomenon called Leningrad hypertension. This was primarily the product of nervous-psychological trauma, combined with dietary deficiencies. The report noted the most obvious traumatic reactions were more common amongst victims of bombardment and shelling rather than starvation.<sup>215</sup> Reports of trauma amongst blockade survivors had mixed implications for veterans. Ex-servicemen returned to a community where doctors, and society in general, were more familiar with and experienced in dealing with nervous disorders. This, however, does not appear to have lessened the stigma attached to mental disorder. If anything it increased competition for extremely limited psychiatric help, with civilians often taking priority

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<sup>209</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, p.193.

<sup>210</sup> Bourke, 'Going Home', p.151.

<sup>211</sup> Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, p.330.

<sup>212</sup> Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat', p.323.

<sup>213</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.368/op.1-1/d.46/1.4.

<sup>214</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.2554/op.2/d.503/1.9.

<sup>215</sup> Merridale, 'The Collective Mind', p.48; Merridale, *Night of Stone*, p.304.



over soldiers. The number of casualties simply overwhelmed the psychiatric care system.

Saint Petersburg/Leningrad had a long history as the leading research centre for military psychology and psychiatry. Psychiatrists' had been studying traumatic responses to the battlefield here from the late nineteenth century. A Saint Petersburg school of psychiatry, which included V.M. Bekhterev, the father of Russian psychiatry, was amongst the first institutions to explore the role of external factors, rather the body's internal processes, in mental illness. Bekhterev argued that degeneration of the nervous system was the result of stress, injury and disease. In 1893 he was appointed the Chair of Psychiatry and Nervous Disorders at the Military Medical Academy. In 1913 he resigned this position and established a Psycho-neurological Institute which would eventually become the Bekhterev institute. By the 1930s these two institutions, the Military-Medical Academy and the Bekhterev Institute, dominated Soviet military psychology.<sup>216</sup> Both institutions studied the psychological impact of the Great Patriotic War upon the Red Army. Although the archives of the Military-Medical Academy remain closed to researchers, parts of the archives of the Bekhterev Institute are open. The institute invested a great deal in studying wartime neuro-psychiatric disturbances. Its published proceedings contained many abstracts summarising research projects studying the effects of head or brain damage, and their connection with depression and trauma.<sup>217</sup> Internal unpublished research reports, preserved in the archive, provide an insight into the sorts of traumatic reactions researchers in Leningrad were observing.

Of particular interest are research papers exploring the functional problems caused by shell-shock (*voennaia kontuziia*) written between 1947-1950. These documents, however, present a complicated, sometimes contradictory, impression of what researchers thought they were observing. This of course was not the first time that the Bekhterev Institute and its researchers had studied shell-shock and war trauma. Krylova argues that; "The cohort of Soviet psychiatrists who came to dominate the profession in the 1940s was unfamiliar with psychological explanatory frameworks."<sup>218</sup> This seems unlikely in the case of the Bekhterev Institute, the senior staff of which

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<sup>216</sup> Wanke, *Russian-Soviet Military Psychiatry*, p.12, 15, 46, 66.

<sup>217</sup> V.N. Miasishcheva (ed.), *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost psikhonevrologicheskogo instituta imeni V.M. Bekhtereva za 1946 god* (Leningrad: Uchebno-proizvodstvennye masterskie Lenpoligraftekhnikuma, 1947); E.S. Averbukh and V.N. Miasishcheva (eds), *Organizatsionno-methodicheskie voprosy sovremennoi neiropsikhiatrii* (Leningrad: 1948).

<sup>218</sup> Krylova, "Healers of Wounded Souls", p.318.

would almost certainly be familiar with psychological explanations of trauma, having been trained in the 1910s or 1920s, perhaps even researching war trauma themselves. But there were strict limits to what could be said about the damaging psychiatric effects of war in the late 1940s. One senses that the writers of both internal documents and published proceedings were carefully navigating a tortuous theoretical path, between official thinking and their own observations.

Some research documents denied a link between traumatic war experiences and mental illness. The clearest statement of this position came in the manuscript of a pamphlet written by E.S. Averbukh with the title; *What every doctor needs to know about psychiatric illness and treating psychiatric illnesses in wartime conditions*. This was intended as a primer for frontline hospitals, evacuation hospitals and civilian doctors encountering forms of mental disturbance. It was written before 1946 and most probably before the war's end. Averbukh argued that;

“During past wars several psychiatrists thought that special ‘war hysteria’ existed. Now we know that in wartime special psychoses do not arise, rather those syndromes and forms which are common in peacetime continue to occur, but owing to wartime peculiarities the ratio of different illnesses changes, and what is more the manifestation of (mental) illness quite often takes on a specific nuance, significantly different from peacetime.”<sup>219</sup>

Other researchers agreed that although there were differences in the pathology of peacetime and wartime psychological disorders, there was no such thing as “war psychosis” and “war hysteria”.<sup>220</sup> F.I. Grinstein and A.Z. Rosenberg argued that older research describing unique forms of “war psychosis” lacked evidence. But they concluded their own research with the equivocal statement that; “although particular ‘war psychoses’ do not exist, military situations create special conditions where some psychiatric syndromes which are rarely encountered in peacetime become more prominent.”<sup>221</sup>

Despite arguing that specific forms of “war psychosis” did not exist, researchers at the Bekhterev institute recorded a wide array of traumatic symptoms that in other societies would have been attributed to shell-shock, battle-fatigue or PTSD. Averbukh suggested that doctors could expect to encounter symptoms associated with disruption

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<sup>219</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.17/1.2.

<sup>220</sup> Miasishcheva (ed.), *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost psikhonevrologicheskogo instituta*, p.7.

<sup>221</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/11.1-20.

of normal mental functions, such as memory loss, poor concentration or confused thinking. They might also encounter soldiers suffering from hallucinations, heightened emotions, paranoia, mania or dementia.<sup>222</sup>

Individual case histories explored the symptoms experienced by veterans, the circumstances in which they developed, the course of treatment prescribed and details about their recovery. M.M. Mirskaia conducted a research project examining delayed or long-term psychiatric disturbances amongst people who had suffered head or brain injuries, most commonly as a result of the physical effects of shell-shock (*kontuziia*). The project sampled 120 cases, the majority of which were men between the ages of twenty-five and forty and therefore presumably soldiers.<sup>223</sup> The case history of patient Sh-ik, a thirty-nine year old man, indicated the sheer variety of symptoms that researchers encountered. On 5 November 1943 Sh-ik was shell-shocked and admitted to the Bekhterev institute on 15 November 1943. Initially he suffered heightened emotions and a heightened physical state, as well as a loss of hearing. He was constantly hungry and thirsty. He would drink up to eight mugs of beer in rapid succession and smoke four or five cigarettes at the same time. By the time he was admitted to the institute this manic phase had passed. He was sluggish, drowsy, suffering memory loss and his mental faculties had slowed. His speech could also be blocked by a tightening of his lips, teeth and tongue. He was emotionally withdrawn, remaining in bed for long periods and taking no interest in his personal hygiene. He became obsessed with ideas that, “nobody loved him, that he was unwanted, and that he was a hindrance to everybody.”<sup>224</sup>

Another research report described forms of trauma recorded amongst soldiers fighting in the Winter War against the Finns. Patient P-v, a twenty-five year-old soldier, was admitted to hospital in January 1940. He had seen fierce fighting between 25 and 31 December 1939, not sleeping during this period of intense activity. After the battle he fell into a deep sleep in which he experienced nightmares about combat. When he awoke he began behaving strangely, and was unable to readjust.<sup>225</sup> Kr-ov, a twenty-four year-old soldier, was wounded in the neck and admitted to hospital, where medics

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<sup>222</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.17/ll.1-2.

<sup>223</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.186/ll.6-8.

<sup>224</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.186/ll.6-8

<sup>225</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/ll.2-4.

observed psychiatric disturbances. He began to confuse his dreams and reality, claiming that he had been awarded a medal by Stalin. At times during his hospitalization he would become agitated and confused and ask about his medal and other gifts from the *vozhd'*.<sup>226</sup> Twenty-three year old T-v had been injured by a grenade exploding in a dugout. Although his physical scars healed well his mental scars were deeper. Obsessive fears of death and blood infection prevented him from sleeping. Deprived of sleep his behaviour became increasingly disturbed. He feared that he might be punished and was concerned that he was being poisoned.<sup>227</sup> Several instances of traumatic reactions to the loss of extremities or amputations as a result of frostbite were noted; something which researchers recalled observing during the First World War.<sup>228</sup> K-ov had lost a foot and several toes on the other to frostbite. The injury transformed his behaviour. He became withdrawn and slept badly. By the time he arrived at hospital he was depressed, suspicious and increasingly fearful that he would be shot for leaking military secrets in his letters home.<sup>229</sup>

Although there were suggestions that fear played a role in stimulating traumatic reactions, researchers at the Bekhterev institute clung steadfastly to physical explanations for mental breakdown. Psychiatric conditions were believed to have organic or materialist causes. Mental breakdown in the armed services was considered to be the product of either physical brain damage or the sustained weakening of the nervous system prompted by physical exhaustion. In his manual Averbukh explained that shell-shock was the result of the explosive force of modern shells, bombs and mines, which shook the brain though rapid changes in atmospheric pressure and functional changes in the operation of the central nervous system.<sup>230</sup> Other researchers argued that prolonged periods of heightened anxiety, stress and exertion gradually weakened soldiers' nervous systems making them more susceptible to breakdown or psychiatric disturbance.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/II.7-8.

<sup>227</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/II.8-10.

<sup>228</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/I.12.

<sup>229</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.115/II.15-16.

<sup>230</sup> TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.17/I.3.

<sup>231</sup> Miasishcheva (ed.), *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost psikhonevrologicheskogo instituta*, p.7.

Such ideas were not unique to Soviet science. In Britain during and after the First World War, there were heated debates about the aetiology of shell-shock. Respected psychiatrists like Frederick Mott, who treated shell-shock patients at the Maudsley Hospital in south London, argued that blindness, deafness, mutism, paralysis and other symptoms were the product of structural or pathological changes in the central nervous system.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, Soviet psychiatry's organic fixation upon the physical effects of contusion bears a striking resemblance to what the US military has labelled mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) amongst Iraq war veterans, and is presently investing millions of research dollars to examine.<sup>233</sup>

Less severe symptoms of war trauma were observed outside of the academy. Nightmares plagued many veterans for the rest of their lives.<sup>234</sup> Other soldiers experienced the same survivors' guilt which affected soldiers of other conflicts. Trauma could manifest itself as; irritability, aggression, violence and alcohol dependency. There were also instances of suicides amongst war veterans. K.I. Ozerov, a metal worker recently demobilized from the army was discovered to have committed suicide on 2 November 1946.<sup>235</sup> Six days later Mikhailov, a demobilized soldier working in a menial position in a construction team, left the hostel where he was living. Two days later he was found hanging in one of the buildings he had been helping to rebuild.<sup>236</sup> The extent of suicide, however, is unclear. In the 1920s the Soviet military had undertaken a systematic study of all acts of suicide in the ranks and amongst officers, and had attempted to reconstruct the circumstances of each suicide.<sup>237</sup> This does not appear to have been the case after 1945. If investigations were made into post-war suicide they are not currently available to historians.

The sensitivity around subjects with the capacity to tarnish the heroic memory of the war, such as trauma or suicide, is as strong as ever. Outside of a small circle of

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<sup>232</sup> Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, pp.28-30.

<sup>233</sup> Simon Wessely, 'Review of Paul Wanke, *Russian/Soviet Military Psychiatry, 1904-1945*', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.44, No.1 (January 2009), pp.194-95.

<sup>234</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.315; Merridale, *Night of Stone*, p.315.

<sup>235</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7480/1.18ob.

<sup>236</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7480/1.60.

<sup>237</sup> Kenneth Pinnow, 'Lives Out of Balance: The "Possible World" of Soviet Suicide during the 1920s', in Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky (eds), *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), pp.130-49.

psychiatrists manifestations of war trauma were ignored, denied or met by a collective silence. As the bombastic patriotic cult of the Great Patriotic War gradually emerged it was almost impossible to find an acceptable language to discuss the fear, horror and trauma of wartime experiences. As Merridale writes, “After a few years of numb silence, the only acceptable account of one’s war was the one which could be shared in the singing of patriotic songs, the exchange of endurance stories, and the solemn commemoration of the heroic dead.”<sup>238</sup>

Soldiers and ex-servicemen who fell ill without any clear physical explanation were unlikely to get help. Military doctors at the front rarely had the expertise or experience to deal with these problems. During the war the priority for Soviet military psychiatrists was to restore soldiers to fighting fitness as quickly as possible, not minimise long-term problems. The organic understanding of disability suggested a straightforward course of treatment. If psychiatric disorders were the product of run-down nervous systems, then they could be remedied by rest and proper nutrition.<sup>239</sup> The target was to return patients to active service within days, and certainly within three weeks.<sup>240</sup> Soldiers not recovering within prescribed timescales might receive more invasive or aggressive treatments. Patients might be drugged with insulin, alcohol, anaesthetics or barbiturates to induce sleep. In extreme cases surgical interventions were developed.<sup>241</sup> There were even instances of punitive tests, including simulated drowning, to detect cases of soldiers faking their symptoms.<sup>242</sup> Disregard for psychological factors in the diagnosis of mental disorders inevitable resulted in their exclusion from treatment.<sup>243</sup>

Things were little better once soldiers re-entered civilian life. In 1946 Leningrad’s psychiatric hospital No.2, located on the Moika embankment, had 360 beds. In the course of the year the hospital treated just 110 war invalids.<sup>244</sup> The

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<sup>238</sup> Merridale, ‘The Collective Mind’, p.50.

<sup>239</sup> Wanke, *Russian-Soviet Military Psychiatry*, p.54, 68.

<sup>240</sup> Merridale, *Night of Stone*, p.305.

<sup>241</sup> Wanke, *Russian-Soviet Military Psychiatry*, p.71; ‘Khirurgicheskoe lechenie dushevnykh boleznei’, *Vechernii Leningrad*, 15 August 1946, p.2.

<sup>242</sup> Merridale, ‘Culture, Ideology and Combat’, p.323; TsGANTD-SPb/f.313/op.2-1/d.17/1.9.

<sup>243</sup> Krylova, “‘Healers of Wounded Souls’”, p.318.

<sup>244</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.508/1.1,10.

Bekhterev institute was primarily concerned with theoretical research, rather than offering practical clinical help. Of the 405 beds available in its clinic just 60 were reserved for treating disabled veterans.<sup>245</sup> The institute also organized lectures, discussions and meetings with war invalids and their families which disseminated research findings and suggested prophylactic psychiatric treatments for depression. Yet such initiatives did little to address the deep underlying psychological problems affecting Leningraders.<sup>246</sup> Conditions in Leningrad's psychiatric institutions were even lower than in hospitals for war invalids, and the forms of treatment often more draconian than in *doma invalidov*. In July 1946 the Leningrad city health department issued a series of instructions designed to counter an increase in the number of patients escaping from psychiatric institutions.<sup>247</sup> The 1946 annual report for psychiatric hospital No.2 noted escape attempts, but asserted that there were no serious accidents resulting from escape attempts and all patients had been found.<sup>248</sup> Euphemistic references to avoiding accidents and confiscating dangerous items stolen from work therapy workshops suggested that attempted suicide was a problem.<sup>249</sup> Horrific conditions were not restricted to Leningrad. A psychiatrist working at a psychiatric hospital for war veterans in Moscow wrote to the Russian Ministry of State Control in June 1945, complaining about that the sanitary condition of the hospital, the lack of stimulation for patients and their neglected condition.<sup>250</sup>

The psychological and psychiatric effects of war were largely ignored. Faced with such appalling conditions few veterans wished to pursue treatment if it identified them as victims. Most veterans had to get on with their lives, and find their own ways of coping. Much of this was familiar from the treatment of psychiatric casualties in other armies and conflicts. The history of European and North American armies' attempts to deal with trauma is littered with examples of soldiers being treated with suspicion and

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<sup>245</sup> Miasishcheva (ed.), *Nauchnaia deiatel'nost psikhonevrologicheskogo instituta*, p.122.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., pp.16-20.

<sup>247</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9256/op.4/d.491/ll.1-1ob.

<sup>248</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.508/l.10.

<sup>249</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9156/op.4/d.491/ll.1-1ob.

<sup>250</sup> GARF-RSFSR/f.A-339/op.1/d.1821/ll.1-3ob; for the results of the investigation see GARF-RSFSR/f.A-339/op.1/d.1821/ll.8-13.

hostility, of barbaric treatment and the failure of ex-servicemen to obtain the support and treatment they so urgently required.<sup>251</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although the official memory of the Great Patriotic War came to dominate public culture in Stalin's last years, many aspects of the war could not be spoken of. The reality of bodies torn to shreds, of soldiers driven mad by what they had witnessed, and of immense physical and psychological pain were strictly off limits. Disabled veterans were caught in a curious position. In theory they were the most privileged and honoured group of veterans. In practice state help was rarely able to allow disabled ex-service personnel to rebuild their lives. All veterans understood that there was a gulf between official myths and the reality of demobilization. However for the war disabled these disparities were especially apparent.

Disabled veterans' real needs were frequently ignored. In Leningrad representatives of the party-state were interested in disability as a barrier to entering the workforce, and as a drain on the region's economic resources. War invalids were publicly heralded as heroes who had made enormous sacrifices on the battlefield. Yet when they came into contact with pensioning bodies, employers and social security and health officials, they found they were treated with suspicion and hostility. The prevailing attitude was that war invalids were work-shy shirkers who were inclined to cheat the system. In a society where everybody faced enormous challenges in rebuilding their lives disabled veterans found themselves pushed to the social margins. Many were forced into low status jobs at the bottom of the pay-scale, because they could not survive on disability pensions. They were often unable to obtain the level of medical treatment they needed or deserved. At best the war disabled were in competition with the rest of the population for very limited resources, at worst they were segregated into specialist institutions where conditions were horrific. The shameful aspects of war invalids' demobilization and post-war re-adaptation were never discussed openly. Despite the collective attempt to ignore the extent of physical and psychological disability, Leningraders were not entirely ignorant of the plight of the war disabled. They lived side by side, worked together and came into contact in public spaces.

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<sup>251</sup> Shephard, *A War of Nerves*; Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp.242-67; Lerner, *Hysterical Men*; Marc Roudebush, 'A Patient Fights Back: Neurology in the Court of Public Opinion in France During the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.35, No.1 (January 2000), pp.29-38.



Against this background of silence and neglect stories of war invalids forcibly cleared from the streets and exiled to Valaam were entirely plausible. The disabled were often treated as a nuisance and inconvenience. Few would have been surprised if the Stalinist state had decided to remove them entirely from urban settings. These stories thrived in the space between official rhetoric and mythology, and the harsh reality of life in post-war Leningrad. These popular myths spread because they challenged official propaganda. They provided a space in which reference to the plight of disabled veterans could be made. The myths about Valaam offer a glimpse into forms of collective memory which acknowledge that disabled veterans were socially marginalized. The manner in which Leningrad's war invalids were treated, by both local state representative and the population at large, was often shameful. Yet the myths that disabled ex-servicemen were cleared from the streets and exiled to isolated locations distanced ordinary Leningraders from responsibility for the war invalids' post-war plight. The blame was heaped on a repressive and uncaring state. In reality, however, many Leningraders had failed to treat the war disabled with either compassion or respect. Disabled veterans were often an uncomfortable reminder of aspects of the war that Leningraders were desperately trying to forget.

## **Chapter 4: Demobilization, Crime and Violence**

This chapter examines what happened when Leningrad's veterans failed to reintegrate into mainstream civilian society in the ways envisaged by demobilization planners. It explores new archival evidence, much of it never previously seen by historians, of ex-servicemen's involvement in a criminal sub-culture within the city and its periphery. In contrast to the official myth of demobilization, which cast veterans as exemplary citizens, many former soldiers were behaving in criminal or socially disruptive ways. However, this chapter challenges the idea that veterans of twentieth-century total warfare, even amidst the extreme violence witnessed on the Eastern Front, were brutalized by their experiences. Although mass demobilization coincided with the post-war crime wave, violent veterans were not to blame. In the overwhelming majority of cases, where ex-servicemen committed crimes, they were not habituated to violence or corrupted by military life. But there were individuals who had failed to find a place in post-war society.

What was remarkable about crimes committed by Leningrad's veterans was the silence that surrounded these socially disruptive acts. The almost complete absence of fears about the brutalization of veterans amongst ordinary Leningraders and local political élites highlights something specific about the community to which ex-servicemen were returning. Leningraders' unique experience of death, violence and criminality during the blockade shaped their responses to returning veterans, and the threat they posed to social stability. An examination of post-war crime, then, further punctures the patriotic myths which claimed that the transition between armed service and civilian normality was seamless. More importantly, it reveals a great deal about wider social attitudes to violence in a community with a traumatic wartime past, and high background levels of violence.

### **The Brutalization Thesis**

Mikhail Klimov<sup>1</sup>, a thirty-two year old *frontovik*, was demobilized in 1945. He found work as a driver (*shofer*) for a construction trust responsible for building and maintaining Leningrad's electrical supply system (*Lenelektroset'stroi*); appropriate

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter the names of criminals and their victims reported in court files, taken from LOGAV fond R-3820 and TsGA-SPb fond 8134 have been changed to protect the identities and privacy of those individuals involved.

work for somebody who had driven tanks during the war. He settled down to life in the Novaia Sergievka, a village in the Vsevolozhskii district, approximately fifteen kilometres from the city centre. The job was a good one. Not only did it enable Klimov to use skills acquired in the army, it came with perks. Access to a Studebaker lorry, imported under lend-lease, offered him the opportunity to earn a second income transporting private citizens and their property around the city and countryside. With the arrival of hundreds of thousands of demobilized veterans, re-evacuees and migrants there was money to be earned by enterprising lorry drivers. On 31 July 1946 Klimov 'commandeered' the lorry in order to make some cash. Things did not go according to plan. Part of the load of hay being transported fell underneath the engine, creating a fire which quickly engulfed the whole vehicle. Only a few parts were salvageable. When this accident came to light *Lenelektroset'stoi* officials ordered that Klimov repair the vehicle at his own expense. The decision not to prosecute or dismiss Klimov, as would have happened in the 1930s, was curious. Perhaps *Lenelektroset'stoi* was keen to avoid an investigation which might reveal the existence of other rackets in its transport pool, or that they had turned a blind eye to employees earning a private income from state property. Yet repairing an American lorry, even on black market profits, was an enormous expense for one man.

On 15 August 1946 Klimov discovered another Studebaker lorry parked in the side-streets around the Mal'tsevskii market, a hot spot for post-war criminality. He befriended the vehicle's driver, and arranged to be driven to woods on Leningrad's outskirts two days later, on the pretext of collecting firewood. On the night of 17 August Klimov shot his fellow driver with a foreign pistol, kept as a wartime souvenir. Klimov stole his papers and the lorry, and then drove to Mga. He spent several days here, fitting parts from his fire-damaged lorry to the stolen vehicle. *Lenelektroset'stoi* accepted that he had repaired the vehicle, and sent him back to work in it. But this was not the end of Klimov's involvement in the shadow economy. On 9 September 1946, he was transporting passengers close to his home, whilst under the influence of alcohol. Approximately three kilometres from the village of Koltushi he collided with an oncoming lorry. Both vehicles were severely damaged, and the other driver was critically injured. Klimov fled, went into hiding and was not finally arrested until 13 December 1946.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2406/ll.108-10

Throughout the twentieth century the idea that the experience of war re-socialized soldiers to be more accepting of and more proficient at violence has been repeatedly asserted. The “Violent Veteran Model” or “Brutalization thesis”, as this idea is known, has a simple logic. It suggests that post-war crime waves are the result of young men, trained to kill, armed with lethal weapons, returning to communities, with which their bonds have been weakened by long periods of enforced separation. Having been exposed to mass death and extreme violence on the frontlines the value of human life was supposedly diminished in veterans’ eyes. Therefore, ex-servicemen were more prone to criminality and disruptive behaviour than non-combatants.<sup>3</sup>

After both World Wars, to quote the historian Joanna Bourke, “civilians expounded frightening prophecies about the violence that would be wreaked upon peaceable societies once combatants returned home.” Sociologists, criminologists, psychiatrists and historians all suggested that combat developed violent habits amongst soldiers; in other words it brutalized them.<sup>4</sup> Dark fears about post-war brutalization were particularly exaggerated in Britain after 1918. Accounts of riots in Luton, Swindon and Doncaster, for example, blamed brutalized soldiers and ex-servicemen for sparking disturbances. Fears of violent veterans armed with guns were central to the passing of the 1920 Firearms Bill, Britain’s first general gun ownership controls.<sup>5</sup> Aggression, destructiveness and violence were believed to be inherent to the forms of masculinity fostered by the war.<sup>6</sup> The historian George Mosse went further, arguing that mass death on the battlefields of the Great War partially undid the ‘civilizing process’ rupturing pre-war social norms across Europe. According to Mosse industrialized killing cheapened the value of life, creating criminality and political militancy.<sup>7</sup>

Fears of brutalization resurfaced in Britain and America as the Second World War drew to a close. In 1944 the American sociologist Willard Waller warned that

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<sup>3</sup> On these theories see Eric H. Monkkonen, *Murder In New York City* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 2001), p.8, 18-19 and Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner (eds), *Violence and Crime in Cross-National Perspective* (New Haven, CT., London: Yale University Press, 1984), pp.74-75.

<sup>4</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, pp.245-63 (op. cit. p.350).

<sup>5</sup> Winter, *Death’s Men*, p.247; Jon Lawrence, ‘Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence and the Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.75 No.3 (September 2003), pp.557-89 (p.557, 560, 563, 567, 571).

<sup>6</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace. The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp.97-99.

<sup>7</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.159-81.

returning veterans presented one of the gravest social threats facing post-war America. Newspapers and popular books expressed concern that veterans would have great difficulty readjusting to civilian life. As the social historian Dixon Wecter wrote in 1944; “A civilian can be licked into shape as a soldier by the manual of arms and a drillmaster, but no manual has ever been written for changing him back into a civilian.”<sup>8</sup> Many British civilians likewise doubted how soldiers who had spilt so much blood could ever return to normal civilian life.<sup>9</sup> Criminologists and sociologists predicted an upsurge in violent crime.<sup>10</sup> One researcher questioned whether ex-servicemen would be able to abandon the aggressive and destructive impulses essential on the battlefield. The Metropolitan Police were deeply concerned about a potential threat from anti-social ex-servicemen desensitized to violence.<sup>11</sup> These ideas gained renewed strength in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. The psychiatrist Robert Lifton wrote extensively about a habit of rage and violence prevalent amongst alienated veterans. He stressed how soldiers habituated to a pattern of violence, would continue to seek outlets for anti-social and criminal impulses in the years following their demobilization.<sup>12</sup>

Klimov’s crimes, in contrast, did not provoke fears about violent veterans. The murder and the trial proceedings were not reported in the Leningrad press, but were hidden from public view. They were all but forgotten. The only trace of the incident is a file preserved in the archive of the Leningrad Oblast Court. Placed against a comparative background this was unusual. Had the same crimes been committed in Britain or America they would almost certainly have attracted greater attention, if not notoriety. Questions would have been asked about how far Klimov, and veterans in general, had been brutalized by extreme violence. Spectacular examples of veterans committing violent crimes provoked moral panics about the effects wartime armed service had upon young impressionable men. Late Stalinist public culture, in contrast, treated veterans as exemplary citizens, rather than potentially dangerous criminals prone to drunkenness and aggression. When veterans were criticized by the state propaganda

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<sup>8</sup> Severo and Milford, *The Wages of War*, pp.291-92; Gambone, *The Greatest Generation Comes Home*, p.29.

<sup>9</sup> Bourke, ““Going Home””, p.152.

<sup>10</sup> John C. Spencer, *Crime and the Services* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p.83.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Roodhouse, ‘The ‘Ghost Squad’: Undercover Policing in London, 1945-49’, in Gerard Oram (ed.), *Policing in Mid-Twentieth Century Europe* (London: Francis Bootle, 2003), pp.171-91 (p.176).

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, *Home From the War. Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (London: Wildwood House, 1974), p.309.

machine it was to lampoon the ways in which they had become conditioned to military jargon and discipline, not violence.<sup>13</sup> Even in the closed world of top secret police investigations, procuracy reports and trial proceedings there was no official concern that these crimes were linked to the after-effects of the Great Patriotic War. Yet if the brutalization thesis is to be believed Klimov's crimes were not isolated incidents, but representative of ex-servicemen's behaviour more generally.

### **Leningrad's Post-war Crime Wave**

One of the central arguments advanced by this Ph.D thesis is that the history of demobilization and post-war readjustment in Leningrad has been obscured by myths. Collectively-held notions about exemplary veterans, rapid reconstruction and the social solidarity between former soldiers and ordinary citizens have obscured darker realities about the Great Patriotic War's true impact on Leningrad and its inhabitants. Myth-making has played a particularly important role in shaping the discourse surrounding post-war criminality. The extent to which Leningrad was affected by post-war increases in crime has largely been hidden from the official narrative of history. Soviet histories of Leningrad after 1945 reinforced propaganda myths about the indefatigable spirit of the 'Hero City' and the rapidity of its reconstruction and recovery. This 'useable' version of the past was preferable to confronting the darker realities of the war's enormous social costs. It also played an important role in diffusing the social tensions surrounding post-war criminality in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast.

Research into post-war crime remains a sensitive issue in Russia. In the past fifteen years a number of important works about crime and policing in post-war Leningrad, many of them written by scholars with privileged access to closed FSB archives, have been published.<sup>14</sup> But, the information they contain has not penetrated beyond a relatively small circle of scholars. The myth that Leningrad was a relatively

<sup>13</sup> See for example the following cartoons 'Na privychnom iazyke', *Krokodil*, 10 August 1945, p.3; 'Sluchai s demobilizovannym', *Krokodil*, 20 December 1945, p.8.

<sup>14</sup> In particular a number of historians with links to Saint Petersburg Ministry of Internal Affairs University have published extensively upon issues of crime and public order. Under the supervision of V.A. Ivanov many of these scholars have enjoyed privileged access to closed archives under the control of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the KGB. See V.A. Ivanov, "'Skorpiony': Korruptsiia v poslevoennom Leningrade', in V.S. Izmozik (ed.), *Politicheskii sysk v Rossii: Istoriia i sovremennost'* (Saint-Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta Ekonomika i Finansov, 1996), pp.238-50; Zharkoi, *Militsiia Leningrada*; I.V. Govorov, 'Razgul prestupnosti v poslevoennom Leningrade i oblasti', *Voprosy Istorii*, No.4 (2003), pp.139-44; Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*; Vladimir Alexandrovich Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditizmom v Leningrade vo votoroi polovine 40-kh gg. Istoricheskii aspekt' (Dissertatsiia kand. ist. nayk., MVD Rossii Saint-Peterburgskii universitet, 2001).

orderly and stable society, despite war's aftermath, persists. Attempting to challenge this notion is neither easy, nor popular. Much of the most detailed and sensitive evidence about the local post-war crime wave remains off limits to western researchers. Furthermore, the materials which are available in supposedly 'open' archives are jealously guarded by archivists. The suggestion that demobilized veterans contributed to a post-war spike in crime, even in small numbers, was often interpreted as a direct affront to soldiers' achievements and was met with outright hostility. The attempt to highlight the issue of post-war criminality is not intended to impugn Leningraders or tarnish the memory of their city's heroic wartime sacrifice. Rather, I aim to demonstrate that Leningrad experienced a surge in crime in the wake of the Second World War comparable to that recorded in Britain or West Germany. As the historian Alan Kramer writes; "Descriptions of the daily struggle for survival in the ruined cities, of the crime wave, and of the black market, are a standard part of any overall history of post-war Western Germany."<sup>15</sup> In contrast crime has been written out of the history of post-war Leningrad.

Mass demobilization coincided with a post-war crime wave which swept across not only Leningrad and its rural hinterland but much of the Soviet Union. Quarterly crime figures for Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast significantly increased from the summer of 1945 onwards, when tens of thousands of veterans began arriving in the region. The number of crimes recorded between October and December 1946 was approximately thirty per cent higher than the previous quarter and nearly double the level recorded between January and March 1945.<sup>16</sup> The bulk of crime in this period, approximately sixty to seventy per cent, consisted of forms of theft or robbery, most commonly apartment burglaries or pick-pocketing.<sup>17</sup> Yet there were also dramatic increases in violent crimes, such as murder and armed robberies, in 1945 and 1946, before gradual reductions in 1947 and 1948, as the local police force gradually regained control.<sup>18</sup> Leningrad's experience of post-war crime mirrored a national dynamic. According to Burds, armed robbery grew by 236 per cent and *banditizm* by 547 per cent

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Kramer, "‘Law-abiding Germans’? Social Disintegration, Crime and the Reimposition of Order in Post-war Western Germany, 1945-9", in Richard J. Evans (ed.), *The German Underworld. Deviants and Outcasts in German History* (London, New York: Routledge, 1988), pp.238-61.

<sup>16</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp.32-35.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp.19-20, 28.

between 1940 and 1946, with the sharpest increases between 1944 and 1946.<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Interior Figures recorded a steady increase in murder rates from 7131 cases in 1944 to 10,218 cases in 1946. Robberies increased by twenty per cent between 1944 and 1945. Steady monthly rises in hooliganism were recorded between October 1945 and January 1946.<sup>20</sup>

Crime statistics, however, are a highly problematic source. In any society rates of reported crime and convictions rarely reflect the full extent of criminality. Statistics are not a transparent window upon the extent of social problems affecting post-war Leningrad. Rather they are a 'crooked mirror' which reflects incomplete and contradictory data about the extent of crime.<sup>21</sup> Given the difficulties faced by Leningrad's under-staffed, inexperienced, overworked and ill disciplined police force it seems likely that a large proportion of low-level criminality went unnoticed. Furthermore, in a political system in which the future elimination of crime was a social goal, crime statistics were particularly vulnerable to manipulation. Given Leningrad's fraught post-war relationship with the political centre in Moscow it was unlikely that local officials wanted to highlight quite how chaotic, disorderly, and dangerous daily life could be for ordinary Leningraders.<sup>22</sup>

Veterans returning to, or choosing to settle in post-war Leningrad, were unlikely to find the normality that official propaganda had led them to believe. Throughout the war soldiers were sustained by thoughts of home. Many had idealized the life they could expect once the war was over.<sup>23</sup> It did not take long for many veterans to realise that the community which they had left behind at the beginning of the war, was very different from that to which they returned. In September 1946 a group of recently demobilized veterans living in a communal apartment at 26 Krasnaia ulitsa, in Leningrad's city centre, wrote a collective letter of complaint to *Leningradskaia pravda*'s editors. Rather

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Burds, 'Bor'ba s banditismom v SSSR v 1944-1953 gg.', *Sotsial'naia Istoriiia, Ezhegodnik 2000* (Moscow: Institut Rossiiskoi Istorii RAN, 2000), pp.169-90 (pp.170-2).

<sup>20</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, pp.13-14.

<sup>21</sup> The phrase 'crooked-mirror' is borrowed from an article exploring the use of Soviet economic statistics; S.G. Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, 'The Crooked Mirror of Soviet Economic Statistics', in R.W. Davies, Mark Harrison and S.G. Wheatcroft (eds), *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.24-37. The phrase is particularly appropriate for crime statistics.

<sup>22</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.103.

<sup>23</sup> Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, "'Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families': Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda", *Slavic Review*, Vol.59, No.4 (Winter 2000), pp.825-47.



than self-interested complaints about the difficulty of obtaining employment or housing they attacked a perceived breakdown in social order.

“Before the war *Ploshchad' Truda* (Labour Square) was the jewel in our district's crown. Returning from the front we hardly recognise it. On the square there is a bar (*pivnaia*), a canteen which sells vodka, two beer-stalls (*pivnie lavki*), but not one bakery. We have to go half a kilometre for bread. Neither is there a single repair workshop. One had to go into the city for every trifle.

In the evening it is frightening to go out onto the staircase. Here the drunks, and various shady characters, who act like hooligans, demand money from passers-by and flog off stolen goods, have found themselves a refuge.

Not long ago, apartment 21 was burgled, and repeated attempts have been made to burgle apartment 22. Our whole life has been turned into a complete nightmare; there are drunks and hooligans everywhere and still the police don't do anything.”<sup>24</sup>

For these veterans the drunkenness and disorder which surrounded them was shocking, and provoked outrage. Having fought to defend their community, city and nation many veterans envisaged a very different post-war society.

The sense of surprise that these veterans expressed when they realised that the utopia they had been fighting for did not exist should not be exaggerated. Many veterans learnt about changes to Leningrad's social fabric before their demobilization. In the months immediately following May 1945 rumours about a post-war crime wave gripped Soviet Russia. According to Burds the fear of crime was so strong that it was comparable to the ‘Great Fear’ which seized France in 1789.<sup>25</sup> Summary reports of unpublished letters (*svodki*) sent to *Pravda*'s editorial offices in Moscow in November 1945 created the impression of a society terrified by the spread of banditism, theft and hooliganism. Correspondents from across the Soviet Union complained that a breakdown in law and order was making many cities no go areas after dark.<sup>26</sup> Leningrad had its own equivalent fears. A party report from November 1946, which examined the implementation of measures to strengthen public order, noted that an increase in theft and robbery, particularly at night, was stimulating fears amongst workers in the Volodarskii, Kalininskii and Vyborgskii districts.<sup>27</sup> Another public opinion report, dated 20 November 1946, complained that armed attacks upon workers in outlying districts

<sup>24</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7702/1.52.

<sup>25</sup> Burds, ‘Bor'ba s banditism’, pp.169-70.

<sup>26</sup> Zubkova (ed.), *Sovetskaia zhizn, 1945-1953*, pp.189-93; Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, pp.38-39.

<sup>27</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.798/11.31-32.

were increasing. Workers from factory 522 were so concerned they had begun to return from their shifts in organized groups.<sup>28</sup> Party officials were more concerned that fear of crime during the dark autumn nights might lower turn-out for elections to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet.<sup>29</sup> It was unlikely that the Red Army could have been entirely insulated from these fears. Serving soldiers almost certainly received news from friends and relatives about crime levels in Leningrad, in much the same way that they learned about the lack of jobs and housing. In 1947, for example, N.V. Iadrovskii wrote to his son, a serving soldier, describing the level of crime in the city. “The people are starving, and this is leading to a growth in crime. The level of crime has become insufferable. They (criminals) will tear things straight out of your hands, especially from children and the elderly.”<sup>30</sup> Although such correspondence was likely to be heavily censored, word of mouth was harder to constrain.

Official responses to rising crime also provided veterans with information about the community to which they were returning. On 17 October 1945 a meeting of the Leningrad City Party Executive Committee heard a report from Lieutenant General Shiktorov, head of the NKVD in both Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast. This report led to the passing of a city soviet resolution which formed the bedrock of the local fight against crime. The euphemistically titled “On measures for the strengthening of the social order and safety in the city of Leningrad” proposed a series of actions to reduce crime. These included more police officers, forcing the legal system to respond more quickly and mobilising individuals not engaged in ‘socially useful’ labour for tree felling or turf cutting.<sup>31</sup> Accompanying press reports made veiled references to combating increases in crime, especially theft and hooliganism.<sup>32</sup> On 23 October 1945 Shiktorov gave a report to a meeting of NKVD and police employees which outlined the tasks facing the police and the local population. Parts of the speech were published in *Leningradskaia pravda*, making them available to a much wider audience.<sup>33</sup> Reading

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<sup>28</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.7480/1.59ob.

<sup>29</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.5/d.798/1.32.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Ivanov, “‘Skorpiony’: korruptsii v poslevoennom Leningrade’, p.240

<sup>31</sup> *Biulleten’ Leningradskoi gospolkoma*, No.21,1945, pp.8-9. Samarin, ‘Bor’ba s banditizmom v Leningrade’, pp.142-48.

<sup>32</sup> ‘V Ispolkom Leningradskoi gospolkoma – O meropriiatiakh po ukrepleniiu obshchestvennogo poriadka i bezopasnosti v g. Leningrade’, *Leningradskaia pravda*, 21 October 1945, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> *Leningradskaia pravda*, 23 October 1945, p.2, Samarin, ‘Bor’ba s banditizmom v Leningrade’, p.145; White, ‘After the War’, p.1153.

between the lines of these pronouncements literate veterans could gain an insight into the rise in crime. In general, however, newspaper articles mentioning crime, anti-social behaviour and social problems did so in closely guarded language. The public were only informed about individual crimes once the police had arrested suspects, or the courts had passed harsh sentences. Few details about crimes or the background of alleged criminals were mentioned in the press. Newspaper articles were intended to create an impression that crime was under control, although they inadvertently drew attention to the existence of crime.<sup>34</sup>

Part of the process of becoming an ordinary civilian after demobilization meant having to share the same social and economic conditions as the rest of society. As demonstrated in previous chapters, veterans' theoretical privilege to better housing, employment opportunities and healthcare rarely amounted to a meaningful practical advantage. Similarly, Leningrad's former soldiers could not be protected from the social problems affecting post-war Leningrad. Veterans were not only aware of the growth in crime from published speeches, rumours of armed bandit groups and the general atmosphere of fear, but from their own experience as victims of the surge in theft and violence.

Having been released from the Red Army's protective auspices demobilized veterans were now on their own, and subject to the same dangers and threats as the rest of society. The risks of civilian life could become apparent within hours of demobilization. On 25 August 1945 Sergeant-Major Merzliakov was demobilized from the Local Air Defence Force (MVPO). He had previously served three years in the Red Army and was awarded a discharge payment of 2800 roubles; a sum more than enough to cushion his return to civilian life. That same day the money was stolen. Merzliakov found the theft of such a large amount distressing. No doubt the responsibility of having lost the only financial reward he was likely to derive from armed service weighed heavily. This was not the kind of homecoming that even the most pessimistic of

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<sup>34</sup> Eric Naiman makes a similar point about crime reporting in the 1920s see, *Sex in Public. The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.150. For a flavour of crime reporting in Leningrad during the crime wave see 'V sude – Shaika khishchnikov s zavoda "Sevkabel"', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 24 October 1946, p.4; 'V gorodskom sude – Bandit rasstrelian', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 13 December 1946, p.4; 'V prokurature goroda – khuligany strogo nakazany', *Leningradskaia pravda*, 18 December 1946, 4; 'Proisshestiia – Khishchniki / Vorovskaia shaika / Spekulianty', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 11 January 1946, p.4; 'Proisshestiia – Krazha so vzломom', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 20 March 1946, 4 and 'Proisshestiia – Shaika spekuliantov', *Vechernii Leningrad*, 21 October 1946, p.4.

veterans had envisaged. After a heavy bout of drinking he committed suicide.<sup>35</sup> Such tragedies were rare. But the steady stream of demobilized soldiers arriving at Leningrad's railway stations, with discharge payments in their pockets, many disorientated by their new found freedom, an unfamiliar environment, and an excess of cheap vodka may well have presented an attractive target for the city's small army of pick-pockets.

Native Leningraders returning to pre-war homes were particularly vulnerable to the theft of personal property. Returning veterans fortunate enough to find that their homes had not been destroyed or occupied by other people often found that their belongings had been stolen. Many had left their possessions in the care of family members who were subsequently evacuated, or who died during the blockade. Abandoned apartments made rich pickings. In the worst days of the blockade valuable possessions with no apparent owner were often sold or bartered to acquire food. There were also rumours that unscrupulous building administrators furnished their own apartments with antiques and luxury items stolen from unoccupied rooms. In August 1945 Engineer-Captain Avetikov wrote to the USSR Procuracy with an allegation that two people had broken into his apartment and stolen his property whilst he had been fulfilling his patriotic duty. Between 1942 and 1944 he had made repeated attempts to contact the building administrator in his apartment block, with whom he had left a key, with requests to check the contents of his room against an inventory. Arriving in Leningrad in January 1945 he found that the room was now being used as a store for building materials. Avetikov alleged that in April 1942 the room had been broken into and cleared of its contents by two officials.<sup>36</sup> Avetikov's protests, and his foresight in preparing an inventory, suggested that his property was worth preserving. Yet few of the soldiers who volunteered in the summer of 1941, or were subsequently conscripted, had bothered to keep detailed lists of their property. In March 1943 a local party report bemoaned the failure of conscripted soldiers and the military authorities to keep such records.<sup>37</sup> For most returning veterans it was not the loss of a few modest items of furniture or a spare set of clothes which provoked consternation, but the loss of personal items. Photographs, letters, personal mementos, very often the last connection that many

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<sup>35</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.9260/op.1/d.27/ll.151-152.

<sup>36</sup> LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1104/ll.2-3ob.

<sup>37</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.12/d.113/ll.86-92(l.89).

returning soldiers had with loved ones who had died during the blockade, had all disappeared.

Corrupt officials and organised scams were responsible for much of this property theft. Fed by the sheer volume of belongings left behind by conscripted, evacuated and deceased Leningraders, a thriving black-market in stolen property developed. In theory the city soviet had a responsibility to preserve the property of dead or absent residents. Evacuated citizens' and serving soldiers' belongings were supposed to be removed from apartments and placed in warehouses controlled by district housing administrations. But, property left in state hands was far from secure. In June 1946 a city soviet decision admitted that officials responsible for cataloguing the property of deceased Leningraders often failed to keep adequate records. This resulted in the theft of valuable items by officials, particularly from warehouses.<sup>38</sup> On 2 November 1945 a fire broke out in one such warehouse on Bolshoi Smolenskii prospect. A police investigation revealed that the fire had been started by two guards in order to cover up systematic theft.<sup>39</sup> In other facilities, where property survived, there was no guarantee that veterans would be reunited with their belongings. According to city soviet resolutions any property that remained in warehouses after 25 September 1946, before tens of thousands of veterans returned to Leningrad, was to be sold. Proceeds not reclaimed after three years would revert to the state.<sup>40</sup>

Occasionally demobilized veterans found themselves the victims of violent attacks. This appears to have been more of a problem in the Leningrad oblast than in the city centre. It was ironic that having cheated death for so long, a small number of veterans would be killed in prosaic everyday post-war settings. Unfortunately, the documents which described these attacks give little indication of the motives behind them. Some incidents appear to have been the result of drunken arguments which escalated out of control. For example, on 15 July 1945 in a club in Luga, in the south of the Leningrad oblast, Parshin, a driver working at the town hospital, was shot with a revolver. He had been demobilized just days earlier. His attacker, a captain of the local garrison, had arrived at the club and become embroiled in an argument with a number of civilians. Without any provocation the accused had started punching a Komsomol

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<sup>38</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta obshchestvennoy bezopasnosti*, No.13, 1946, p.12.

<sup>39</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.72-77 (l.73ob).

<sup>40</sup> *Biulleten' Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo komiteta obshchestvennoy bezopasnosti*, No.14, 1946, p.14.

instructor in the face; he then shot and killed Parshin.<sup>41</sup> According to one scholar alcohol-fuelled confrontations such as these were the most common scenarios for post-war murder.<sup>42</sup>

Although many attacks upon veterans were seemingly random acts of violence, other killings hint at a more complicated background. In the early hours of 4 March 1946 a fire was discovered at the Novaia Zakhon'e collective farm in the Volosovskii raion. The fire had been started in the home of Ivanov, the collective farm chairman and a demobilized veteran. When the fire was extinguished Ivanov's decapitated body was found. The police report of the incident contained no further details.<sup>43</sup> The nature of this killing suggests either the involvement of an organised criminal element, or perhaps a settling of scores. Ivanov would not have been the first veteran turned *kolkhoz* chairman to have been extremely unpopular with his fellow farmers.

A more common experience was for returning veterans to confront the growth in speculation and corruption, which had become endemic in Leningrad during the blockade. An illegal second economy operated below the surface of Soviet society throughout its entire history, but during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath this shadow economy was particularly important in ordinary citizens' survival strategies.<sup>44</sup> As Bidlack has argued during the first winter of the siege a survival-based consensus emerged amongst Leningraders which legitimated previously unacceptable behaviour.<sup>45</sup> By the time that mass demobilization had begun, speculation, corruption and other forms of economic crime had become a way of life for Leningraders. As Fürst writes; "Selling private property, speculating with food and consumer items and even the misappropriation of state funds was something that was visible to and undertaken by

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<sup>41</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.24/op.12/d.111/l.40.

<sup>42</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.20.

<sup>43</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.150/l.44.

<sup>44</sup> On the importance and persistence of the second economy see Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade. Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917 – 1953* (Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, pp.59-66; Julie Hessler, 'A Postwar Perestroika? Toward a History of Private Enterprise in the USSR', *Slavic Review*, Vol.57, No.3 (Fall 1998), pp.516-42 and Jones, "People Without a Definite Occupation", pp.236-54.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Bidlack, 'Survival Strategies in Leningrad during the First Year of the Soviet-German War', in Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bontwetsch (eds), *The People's War. Responses to World War in the Soviet Union* (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp.81-107.

all.”<sup>46</sup> Speculation, then, was rife. In October 1946 alone the Leningrad police arrested 2387 people for speculating in ration cards.<sup>47</sup> Theft of food and manufactured items occurred at almost every level of the production and distribution process. In 1945 alone Leningrad’s restaurants and caf  s lost over 958,000 roubles in wastage, embezzlement and theft.<sup>48</sup> Losses in trade organisations in the Leningrad oblast’ were enormous, totalling approximately 5,727,000 roubles in 1946 and 10,278,000 roubles in 1947.<sup>49</sup> Although speculation was accepted with grudging acceptance by many Leningraders, demobilized veterans were, in general, less willing to accept the growth in informal exchange mechanisms. In previous chapters we have encountered veterans’ anger and frustration about corruption in the distribution of housing and employment. Likewise, veterans who viewed themselves as socially-conscious protectors of society railed against speculators, accusing them of enriching themselves at the expense of wider society.<sup>50</sup> Complaints about speculation and corruption also reflected former soldiers’ sense of dislocation. With the death of so many of their peers, and the arrival of so many new residents, it was hardly surprising that many ex-servicemen felt detached from the informal networks controlling the supply of goods and services.

Veterans arriving in Leningrad between July 1945 and 1950 were rejoining a society which had been transformed almost beyond recognition. Ravaged by fighting, depopulated by conscription, evacuation and mass death, cut off from the Soviet ‘mainland’ and crippled by extreme shortages of food and basic goods the blockaded city became a space in which crime flourished. Leningrad after 1945 was also a more violent, dangerous and unstable community than it had been before the war. Many aspects of life in Leningrad and the surrounding region were unappealing and unsettling for returning veterans. The growth in hooliganism, petty theft, economic crime and violent crime were especially disorientating for ex-servicemen who longed to return to some measure of peaceful normality.

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<sup>46</sup> Juliane C. A. F  rst, ‘Stalin’s Last Generation: Youth, State and Komsomol, 1945-1953’ (Ph.D Dissertation, University of London, 2003), p.265

<sup>47</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost’ i bor’ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.120.

<sup>48</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.227/ll.26-29 (l.27).

<sup>49</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost’ i bor’ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.138 .

<sup>50</sup> See the unpublished memoirs of Ivan Gonchukov, TsGAIPD-SPb/f.4000/op.18/d.333/ll.165-66.

### **Explanations for the post-war crime wave**

Leningrad's post-war crime wave had many causes and explanations. The war prompted many social, economic, political and cultural changes. A comprehensive study of the reasons behind Leningrad's post-war crime wave is yet to be written. Precisely how wartime disruption shaped the dynamics of crime in local communities merits further research. Here I offer a number of preliminary observations about the causes of crime in Leningrad, including the role played by serving and demobilized soldiers.

Leningrad's political elite tended to blame rising levels of crime, hooliganism and industrial indiscipline on newly-arrived 'outsiders'. In the report of his speech made to NKVD and police employees published on 23 October 1945 Shiktorov blamed the growth in crime upon unstable criminal elements which had infiltrated the returning population. He called for a strengthening of the passport regime to filter out undesirable elements and, "methodically cleanse our city of thieves, hooligans, parasites and other people who have no place in Leningrad."<sup>51</sup> Despite this the passport regime and system of residence permits, designed to prevent certain types of people settling in Leningrad and its environs, was unable to cope with the expanding population. Many people managed to enter the city without official permission. 32,865 people were forced to leave Leningrad in 1946, and a further 37,681 in 1947, because they lacked residency permits.<sup>52</sup> Many more managed to purchase permits on the thriving black market, or bribe officials to turn a blind eye.

There were good reasons to fear the arrival of criminal elements in Leningrad. In July 1945 an amnesty of criminals to celebrate Soviet victory released over a million prisoners, whose sentences had been revoked or reduced, from the Gulag.<sup>53</sup> Inevitably professional criminals found their way into the city. Between September and October 1945, Leningrad's police force arrested 606 amnestied prisoners.<sup>54</sup> The sense of independence and freedom from central control, which resulted from the city's wartime isolation, combined with an unstable and shifting social situation, may have made Leningrad an attractive destination for criminals. Something similar was observed in the

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<sup>51</sup> *Leningradskaia pravda*, 23 October 1945, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.105.

<sup>53</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Amnesty 1945: The Revolving Door of Stalin's Gulag', *Slavic Review*, Vol.64, No.2 (Summer 2005), pp.274-306 (p.274).

<sup>54</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.67; Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditizmom v Leningrade', p.43.



post-war Donbas, where the image of the free steppe combined with the need for manpower for reconstruction acted as a magnet for criminals and adventurers.<sup>55</sup> The pull of the Soviet Union's second city, cultural capital, the birthplace of the revolution, an industrial and scientific power-house, and above all a proud hero city was almost certainly stronger. At an Oblast procuracy conference convened in February 1947 several prosecutors blamed local surges in crime upon bands of touring criminals (*gastrolery*), who would suddenly arrive in an area, commit a spree of offences and then move on.<sup>56</sup> Large numbers of homeless orphans (*bezprizornye deti*) and neglected youths (*beznadzornye deti*) left to roam the streets, many of them attracted to Leningrad from other areas of the Soviet Union, were also held responsible for the growth in crime. Arrests of minors for criminal offences were remarkably high in the first post-war years; 76,787 in 1945 alone. According to Samarin youths were often recruited to become members of organised criminal gangs. Approximately a quarter of individuals tried for banditism in the immediate post-war period were under eighteen years of age.<sup>57</sup> The level of youth crime continued to provoke concern as late as February 1948.<sup>58</sup>

Rootless elements which had penetrated the city were a convenient scapegoat for Leningrad's social problems. Only rarely did anybody suggest that ordinary people had been forced to turn to crime out of desperation.<sup>59</sup> In part, the link between outsiders and crime reflected anxieties about the arrival of an influx of uneducated and unskilled rural migrants. Rapid expansions in population can be destabilising for any society. But, following so closely upon the mass starvation of native Leningraders, the arrival of so many 'new' people was especially painful. Leningrad's population more than doubled between 1945 and 1947; rising from 927,000 in 1945 to 1,920,000 in 1947.<sup>60</sup> According to Ruble approximately 1.3 million new migrants, many of them from the Kalinin, Saratov and Sverdlovsk regions, settled in the city in the first few post-war years.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas. A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland. 1870s-1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.301.

<sup>56</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.2/d.94/l.7-10.

<sup>57</sup> Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditismom v Leningrade', p.47.

<sup>58</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.90.

<sup>59</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.3/d.94/l.7.

<sup>60</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.10; LOGAV/f.R-4380/op.1/d.1270/l.3-8. See also *Biulleten' Lengorispolkoma*, No.4, 1948, p.7.

<sup>61</sup> Ruble, *Leningrad*, p.51.

Inward migration was something Saint Petersburg/ Leningrad had confronted many times in its past, particularly in the late nineteenth century and the 1930s. Yet, the influx of migrants after the lifting of the blockade was on a different scale from anything experienced previously. As Bruce Lincoln writes; “By 1948, scarcely one worker in eight in the city’s textile mills, and barely more than one in three in its machine-building plants, could claim to have any connection with Leningrad before the war.”<sup>62</sup> Many of these people had no knowledge of their adopted city’s history, and only the slightest appreciation of the blockade’s horrors. For the nucleus of surviving Leningraders, both *blokadniki* and demobilized veterans, the arrival of so many new people was hard to accept. The rapidity with which their dead loved ones had been replaced must have seemed almost obscene.

Although the post-war crime wave in the Leningrad region was blamed on arrival of criminal elements and socially marginal groups, there was no conjecture about the involvement of ex-servicemen in delinquent or deviant activities. In many ways these silences are more interesting than the stilted public statements about the risks posed by socially marginal outsiders. The categories of veterans and harmful social elements frequently overlapped. As observed in chapter three disabled veterans, particularly those drawn to Leningrad from neighbouring regions, were often treated as an unwelcome presence and were pushed to the social margins. Yet a connection between veterans and crime was resolutely avoided. Whereas, twentieth-century European and North American societies expressed fears about the return of violent veterans, there appears to have been almost no public or private concern that veterans might turn to crime. The authorities responsible for demobilization treated veterans with suspicion, not because they might have been brutalized by combat, but because they had been exposed to life beyond Soviet borders. Leningrad’s political elite were more troubled by the possibility that veterans might spread and infect the local population with the contagion of western-capitalist ideas, attitudes and values, than the prospect that veterans might exhibit violent, anti-social or criminal tendencies.<sup>63</sup>

Demobilization officials were, however, alive to the threat of public disorder amongst crowds of soldiers passing through demobilization points. The dismantling of mass conscript armies after the First World War, and Leningrad’s own revolutionary

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<sup>62</sup> Bruce-Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, p.311.

<sup>63</sup> This subject is addressed in greater detail in chapter five.

experience, highlighted the risk of riots amongst demobilized veterans.<sup>64</sup> Intoxicated by the long awaited freedom from army discipline, as well as alcohol, soldiers in the process of demobilization represented a heightened risk of disorder. Troop *eshelons* had the capacity to degenerate into drink-fuelled disorder. Vladimir Kozlov argues that these disturbances resembled traditional forms of carnival, during which the psychological tensions and pressures built-up during years of highly regulated military life were vented through criminal or deviant behaviour.<sup>65</sup> Yet outbursts of violence were more serious than a symbolic Bakhtinian inversion of the established order. Nationally there were reports of returning soldiers beating up railway staff, raping women, and even becoming engaged in gunfights with local NKVD detachments.<sup>66</sup> Fears about the threat posed to public order by troop transports were not the same as fears that veterans would drift towards criminality.

As far as can be discerned from the available evidence Leningrad avoided mass-uprisings amongst soldiers awaiting demobilization. Reports addressed to the Leningrad soviet by Major-General Rastorguev, head of the City *voenkomat*, indicated that the behaviour of veterans arriving in the city was closely monitored. On 29 July 1945 Rastorguev optimistically wrote:

“On the whole demobilization in the city of Leningrad is progressing normally and in an organized way. The mood of demobilized (soldiers) is healthy; hitherto there hasn’t been a single case of immoral behaviour either at stations or at demobilization points.”<sup>67</sup>

Concerns about the threats posed by veterans to public order were restricted to the precise moment when soldiers became civilians. From the perspective of demobilization officials, once veterans had passed through checkpoints, collected their civilian papers, and had been transported to their homes they no longer posed a significant risk. While soldiers were part of an organized collective united by common experiences and close emotional bonds, ex-servicemen were isolated individuals cut adrift in an unfamiliar environment. Without officially sanctioned veterans’ associations there was no institution around which a common identity or shared collective interest could form. It

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<sup>64</sup> On Germany see Bessel, ‘The “Front Generation” and the Politics of Weimar Germany’, pp.121-136 and Bessel, *Germany After the First World War*; France - Prost, *In the Wake of War*, and Britain – Winter, *Death’s Men*, p.241 and Kent, *Making Peace*, p.98.

<sup>65</sup> Kozlov, *Massovye Besporyadki v SSSR*, pp.60-61; Kozlov, *Neizvestnyi SSSR*, p.152.

<sup>66</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.26-27.

<sup>67</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.155; TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.170.

was one thing for civilian officials to have to deal with angry veterans banging their fists on desks, quite another to diffuse disorderly bands of ‘demob-happy’ soldiers.

The absence of official or popular anxieties about the return of deviant or brutalized ex-servicemen is even more remarkable when the Red Army’s wartime experience is considered. In quantitative and qualitative terms the violence unleashed on the Eastern Front during the Second World War far surpassed anything seen on the Western.<sup>68</sup> The Red Army was a ‘meat-grinder’, which drew soldiers in, chewed them up and spat them out. More than eight million Soviet soldiers were killed between 1941 and 1945. In contrast British and American losses between 1939 and 1945 amounted to less than a quarter of a million in each case.<sup>69</sup> Extreme violence characterized the entire war, but some of the most vicious fighting came in the war’s final months. When soldiers began returning home in the summer of 1945 memories of combat were still fresh in their minds. 450,000 Wehrmacht soldiers were killed in January 1945. This was the fastest rate of the entire war, far exceeding the 185,000 deaths recorded in January 1943 the month of Soviet victory at Stalingrad.<sup>70</sup> Not only was the Red Army killing its enemies at unprecedented rates, its soldiers were being killed by their hundreds of thousands. The offensive in East Prussia cost 584,000 casualties, the three week long Battle for Berlin over 300,000.<sup>71</sup> The final stages of the war, fought on the basis of hatred and revenge, were an orgy of violence, death and destruction. Encouraged by their officers, state propaganda and their own memories of Nazi atrocities the Red Army extracted a terrifying revenge on its enemies. There could be little doubt that returning veterans had witnessed and experienced the darker side of total warfare, and had done terrible things in the name of Soviet victory.<sup>72</sup>

The most shocking aspect of this Armageddon was the mass rape of women in Eastern Europe and Germany. Rather than a lustful diversion rape was an integral part of the push for victory. It became a means of extracting revenge, terrifying and humiliating

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<sup>68</sup> See Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45. German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare*, Second Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) and Amir Weiner, ‘Something To Die For, A Lot To Kill For. The Soviet System and the Barbarisation of Warfare, 1939-45’, in George Kassimeris (ed.), *The Barbarisation of Warfare* (London: Hurst and Company, 2006), pp.101-25.

<sup>69</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, p.3.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945. From War to Peace* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p.2.

<sup>71</sup> Overy, *Russia’s War*, p.262; Bessel, *Germany 1945*, pp.11-12.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Bessel, ‘Hatred after the War: Emotion and the Postwar History of East Germany’, *History and Memory*, Vol.17, Nos.1-2 (Autumn 2005), pp.195-216.

the civilian population, of reinforcing the bonds between Soviet soldiers and inflicting total defeat on the enemy.<sup>73</sup> Nor did rape disappear as an instrument of revenge and terror once victory had been won. The threat of sexual violence continued to hang over women in the Soviet zone of occupation beyond 1947.<sup>74</sup>

A collective silence quickly enveloped the reality of frontline experience. Many veterans never spoke about the horrors of combat or the violence of modern warfare. Ex-soldiers tried to protect their families from detailed knowledge about the reality of war on the frontlines. A comprehensive study of soldiers' letters written between January and April 1945 by a Russian historian failed to encounter a single reference to violent attacks upon the civilian population by Soviet soldiers.<sup>75</sup> As in any conflict, soldiers' correspondence was governed by unwritten rules designed to protect the civilian world from unpleasant information.<sup>76</sup> Soldiers concerned about how they might fit back into society and resume everyday family life were reluctant to broach the subject that effective military behaviour required them to behave violently and to kill. The Red Army, the party-state and wider society demonstrated a similar reticence to confront the contradiction that returning veterans were simultaneously heroes who embodied the ideal characteristics of *homo-soveticus*, and men who had shed blood, raped innocent women and behaved shamefully. The speed with which these crimes disappeared from the documentary record and the collective consciousness was remarkable.

Other aspects of the Red Army's marauding, albeit in a sanitized form, were common knowledge. While discussion of violence was strictly off limits the appropriation of 'trophy' items, the official euphemism for looting, was common knowledge. Soldiers wrote home with details of things they had stolen without fear of judgement.<sup>77</sup> Exporting the spoils of war was not something that prompted pangs of

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<sup>73</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone in Occupation, 1945-1949* (London, Cambridge, MA.: Belnapp Press, 1995), pp.70-71; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, pp.264-75; Atina Grossmann, 'Trauma, Memory and Motherhood. Germans and Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-Nazi Germany, 1945-1949', in Bessel and Schumann (eds), *Life After Death*, pp.93-127 (p.100).

<sup>74</sup> Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, pp.79-86.

<sup>75</sup> E. Sherstianoi, 'Germaniia i nemtsy v pis'makh krasnoarmeiitsev vesnoi 1945g.', *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, No.2 (2002), pp.137-51 (pp.144-46).

<sup>76</sup> For a detailed discussion on the nature, functions and importance of unwritten rules in soldiers' letter writing see Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle. Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, pp.49-72).

<sup>77</sup> Sherstianoi, 'Germaniia i nemtsy v pis'makh krasnoarmeiitsev vesnoi 1945g.', pp.144-46.

conscience from most soldiers or civilians. Burning hatred, the disparity in material wealth and a semi-official licence to loot led to the requisitioning of goods from Germany, Austria and Hungary on a monumental scale.<sup>78</sup> The Stalinist state requisitioned huge volumes of industrial machinery, railway track, rolling-stock, food and fuel. Leningraders were well aware that their government were stripping Germany of its resources. Many workers installed and operated looted German plant in the city's ruined factories. Since looting was officially sanctioned, a culture of theft spread through the Red Army. To quote Naimark: "Corruption and thievery were as endemic as drinking and violence and were prevalent in the ranks from the lowest private to the top generals."<sup>79</sup>

Regulations drawn up in January 1945 made provision for soldiers to send home monthly parcels of trophy goods, of no more than five kilograms, free of charge. The weight allowances for officers were more generous; ten kilograms for most officers, sixteen for generals.<sup>80</sup> High ranking officers found ways of looting extraordinary volumes of luxury goods, including cars, motorcycles, pianos, carpets, tapestries and furs. A number of officers overstepped the limits of what was considered legitimate reward for loyal service, and appeared to be running semi-criminal rackets. The head of the Financial Administration for Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SVAG), for example, was accused of sending nine automobiles and two railway carriages full of furniture back to the Ministry of Finance in Moscow.<sup>81</sup> Major-general Botvinnik, head of SVAG's chemical service, was caught transporting 1700 metres of fabric, furs, pictures, furniture and a 500 gram gold bar home in a railway wagon.<sup>82</sup> While accusations of excessive looting were later used to discredit senior officers, including Zhukov, nobody much cared what ordinary infantrymen managed to loot.<sup>83</sup> Junior officers and rank and file soldiers availed themselves of opportunities to acquire watches, radios, bicycles, sewing machines and luxury clothing. But much of their looting was to supplement basic rations or to meet the practical needs of wives and

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<sup>78</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, p.31.

<sup>79</sup> Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, p.34.

<sup>80</sup> Sherstianoi, 'Germaniia i nemtsy v pis'makh krasnoarmeiitsev vesnoi 1945g.', p.144; Merridale; *Ivan's War*, p.279.

<sup>81</sup> Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, p.35.

<sup>82</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.3/l.58.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Service, *Stalin. A Biography* (London: Macmillian, 2004), p.528.

children. Soldiers sent back: foodstuffs (especially deficit goods such as tea, coffee and chocolate), clothing, shoes, fabric, but also nails, panes of glass and tools.<sup>84</sup> Families did not have to be protected from knowledge about looting, they were one of its beneficiaries.

While Leningraders could claim ignorance about the conduct of troops serving beyond Soviet borders, they were well acquainted with the behaviour of soldiers serving in the Leningrad oblast and in the city during and after the war. The actions of the Red Army within the Leningrad region rarely descended to the depths witnessed in Germany, but civilians frequently encountered thuggish behaviour. Before the end of the war complaints about soldiers destroying buildings, stealing food and property, expropriating horses and carts and even blowing up fishponds with grenades were commonplace.<sup>85</sup> The arrival of peace did not end indiscipline, disorderly behaviour and outright criminality. Indeed, serving soldiers were responsible for a significant proportion of crime. Procuracy officials calculated that in 1945 and 1946 soldiers were responsible for approximately seventeen per cent of total crime.<sup>86</sup> In December 1945, for example, 95 soldiers were arrested in Leningrad: 4 for murder, 8 for burglary, 9 for desertion, 33 for thefts, 15 for hooliganism, 4 for speculation and 22 for other offences.<sup>87</sup> Between October 1946 and January 1947 the Leningrad oblast's military procuracy investigated 137 crimes committed by soldiers upon local civilians, including 97 thefts and 13 armed robberies.<sup>88</sup>

Hooliganism, drunken brawls and more serious offences were a larger problem amongst soldiers stationed outside Leningrad. Discipline had improved in the Leningrad garrison during 1946, largely as a product of reducing the amount time soldiers spent outside barracks, and by ensuring soldiers visiting public spaces were closely monitored by their officers.<sup>89</sup> The same was not true of soldiers stationed in isolated locations, where the chain of command was weaker. According to Iaklov, a party secretary from

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<sup>84</sup> Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp.30-33; Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.279.

<sup>85</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.11/d.1266/l.1 and TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.90/l.19 in Dzeniskevich (ed.), *Iz raionov oblasti soobshchaiut*, pp.367-68 and p.456.

<sup>86</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.3/d.94/l.53; LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.3/d.96/l.6.

<sup>87</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.95-108 (l.101).

<sup>88</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3824/op.3/d.94/l.33-34.

<sup>89</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.73.

Vartemiagi, situated on Leningrad's northern periphery, soldiers in Sertolovo, Agalatovo and Termolovo were routinely robbing trade points, shops and private apartments, assaulting civilians and behaving indecently in public spaces, especially cinemas, clubs and cafés.<sup>90</sup> Behaviour of this kind was commonplace. On 27 October 1946, for example, a group of fifteen soldiers went on the rampage in Keksgolm, modern day Priozersk. Having arrived in the town already drunk, they proceeded to assault several customers in a café, demanded bread from a shop, and then stood in the town square firing their guns in the air.<sup>91</sup> Residents in locations where policing was limited were often completely at the mercy of violent mobs of unruly soldiers. Clashes between rival groups of heavy-drinking soldiers had the potential to escalate into serious situations. On the night of 14 July 1946 two groups of drunken soldiers and their officers visited a club in the Efimovskii district of the Leningrad oblast. They became embroiled in a drunken brawl with tragic consequences. When the fight was eventually broken up one group of soldiers left the club and set up a roadblock on a nearby bridge hoping to re-engage their rivals. When a vehicle containing locals approached their position the soldiers opened fire killing one person and injuring four others.<sup>92</sup> Incidents replicating this pattern of disruptive and violent behaviour continued to occur beyond 1948.<sup>93</sup>

### **Criminality amongst Veterans**

Given the behaviour of the Red Army during the war, and the conduct of serving soldiers in the Leningrad oblast in the years following the war's end, it was surprising that there was no concern about the potential dangers posed by returning ex-servicemen. In hindsight, had Leningrad's political elite been so minded conjecture about a link between veterans and the post-war crime wave could easily have been made. First, local peaks in crime rates coincided with spikes in the number of demobilized veterans arriving in the city. The rise in crime between October and December 1945, for example, occurred at the same time as one of the most intensive phases of mass demobilization. Over 45,000 soldiers returned to Leningrad in November 1945 alone.<sup>94</sup> With so many

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<sup>90</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.278-80.

<sup>91</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.259.

<sup>92</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.125.

<sup>93</sup> For examples see TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.151; TsGA-SPb/f.7178/op.53/d.132/l.164; TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.167/l.21.

<sup>94</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.23.



veterans competing for employment, housing, ration-cards and the attention of the bureaucrats allocating these resources Leningrad's leaders should have been able to predict that frustrated veterans caught in the bottleneck might find other ways of occupying and supporting themselves. Secondly, the mechanics of a demobilization conducted by age-group may also have been a contributing factor. By the autumn of 1946, the peak in Leningrad's post-war crime wave, the veterans being released from military service were the youngest birth cohorts for whom adjustment was the most difficult. Sociologists often suggest that young men are responsible for a large proportion of crime in any society. Younger birth cohorts who returned to find that the best jobs and apartments had been taken by older and more experienced men were more likely to be involved in crime. Young men who felt insufficiently rewarded for their wartime sacrifice and deprived of opportunities for social advancement were more likely to pose a social threat. Finally, as argued in chapter two the Red Army was an extraordinarily diverse social entity. Men and women from all walks of life, including criminal elements, had been mobilized to fight. Healthy Gulag prisoners of fighting age, who did not pose a political threat, had been mobilized to fight by means of a series of amnesties. In the first three years of the war the NKVD released approximately 975,000 prisoners and several hundred thousand special exiles. Although criminal recidivists were theoretically excluded from amnesties, the army's insatiable demand for manpower ensured that criminals found their way into uniform, and in turn back into civilian society.<sup>95</sup>

Evidence that not all veterans readjusted to civilian life soon began to accumulate. Before long reports of thefts, armed robberies, violent murders committed by ex-servicemen, as well as a wealth of lower level speculation and fraud, started to pile up on the desks of policemen and procuracy officials. For the Leningraders handling the investigation and prosecution of these crimes, as well as the administrative functions supporting this, it must have seemed obvious that veterans were responsible for a significant proportion of crime. Unfortunately, there is no available statistical data to shed light upon what precise proportion of recorded crime was committed by veterans. An attempt to reconstruct such information from court files is beyond the limits of this study. Samarin who has attempted to reconstruct the social structure of individuals arrested for banditism in the Leningrad region in this period, from an exhaustive study of the court files, argues that demobilized *frontoviki* were highly represented. He

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<sup>95</sup> Applebaum, *GULAG*, pp.402-4.

calculates that in 1946 approximately thirty-seven per cent of individuals arrested for banditism, rising to fifty per cent in 1947, were demobilized veterans or war invalids.<sup>96</sup> To put this in perspective, at the beginning of 1947 demobilized veterans represented approximately fifteen per cent of Leningrad's total population.<sup>97</sup>

While there was no attempt to monitor the level of crime committed by veterans, top secret police reports contain evidence that veterans frequently failed to live up to their saintly public image. *Spetssvodki* and *spetssoobshchenie* forwarded to the chairman of the city and oblast soviets by General-Lieutenant Shiktorov often contained brief details of crimes committed by veterans. Although these are insufficiently detailed to enable a reconstruction of the circumstances of individual crimes, they do provide an indication of the range of offences committed by veterans.

Disabled veterans are particularly well represented in these reports. Prior to the beginning of mass demobilization war invalids were amongst the least controlled groups in society. They enjoyed relative freedom of movement and privileged access to goods distributed by welfare organizations. Given the difficulties of finding suitable employment, and the manner in which many were cruelly pushed to the social margins it was hardly surprising that many disabled veterans retreated into the shadow economy of private trade and speculation. In August 1945 a police report examining the numbers of people in Leningrad not engaged in socially useful work noted that unemployed war invalids were visiting the city's markets, where they bought up goods in order to sell them on at a profit.<sup>98</sup> In January 1946 there were reports of five unemployed war invalids in the Tikhvinskii district making a living from speculation and spending the profits on alcohol.<sup>99</sup> In April 1947 two unemployed war invalids were arrested for speculating in ration cards.<sup>100</sup> Eradicating private trade amongst the war disabled does not appear to have been easy. Since speculation enjoyed a measure of social acceptance, if not outright support, it was not always seen as overtly criminal. In January 1945 N.N.

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<sup>96</sup> Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditismom v Leningrade', pp.79-80.

<sup>97</sup> Author's calculation based on the following figures. By the end of November 1946 a total of 241,021 soldiers had been demobilized in the city of Leningrad (TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/1.180). By 1 January 1947 city district social security offices had record of 53,334 war invalids claiming disability pensions (TsGAIPD-SPb/f.24/op.2v/d.8230/1.1). On 1 January 1947 official population statistics estimated Leningrad's population at 1,920,000 (Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.10).

<sup>98</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/11.78-78ob.

<sup>99</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.110/1.21.

<sup>100</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.214/1.33.

Gromov, a disabled veteran living in the Volkhovskii district, was detained with large quantities of goods. On his arrest he was defiant: “All the same I am going to trade. Now, I’m going to gather fifteen people and then try and arrest me! If you touch me you will have to call the whole police department out.”<sup>101</sup> It is possible that speculation offered disabled veterans like Gromov a social standing and importance that they would have been unable to find in other walks of life.

There were indications that disabled veterans were heavily involved in property crime. For example, between December 1944 and January 1945 V.M. Khlebnikov, a twenty-six year old unemployed veteran and another unemployed man committed nine apartment burglaries, netting an estimated 60,000 roubles. Operating at the same time another two disabled veterans, aged twenty-two and twenty-five, committed a string of burglaries stealing approximately 47,000 roubles of property.<sup>102</sup> P.Y. Feldman, another unemployed war-invalid, was arrested at a market trying to sell a five carat diamond and a diamond ring. Gold coins, 13,000 roubles in cash, five diamonds, three gold watches and a variety of other valuable were discovered when his apartment was searched.<sup>103</sup> It was unclear whether these were ‘trophy’ items, or property stolen from Leningraders.

Police reports tended to privilege the most audacious examples of criminal activity, focusing upon sensational cases involving large sums of money or valuable items. The bulk of crime, however, was more prosaic. It seems likely that most crime was committed by people driven to desperate measures by extreme poverty, rather than a desire for personal enrichment or because of involvement with organized criminal groups. This, in part, explains the over representation of disabled veterans amongst post-war criminals. On 31 December 1947 G.A. Svirina was excluded from the Leningrad communist party, because she had been given a two year suspended sentence for fraud. During the war she was awarded the Red Star medal for having rescued fifty-seven soldiers from the battlefield. During one of these heroic acts she was injured and disabled. By 1947 she was a single mother with two young children, receiving a monthly pension of just 300 roubles. Demobilization had not been kind to her. In a letter to the party she had attempted to explain her situation:

“At the moment I am in a very difficult material situation: I am bringing up two children – a daughter of four and a half years and a three month old son,

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<sup>101</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.110/l.21.

<sup>102</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.20ob.

<sup>103</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.21ob.

I live alone, I don't have any relatives. Also, I don't have any help from anybody. I live very poorly. My home, where I lived before the war, was occupied by the Germans, where they shot my brother. I don't even have my own bed or table. At the moment I'm standing in a room with the things of a dead person, soon the district finance department are coming to take them away, I and the children even have to sleep on the floor. I don't have any money to buy anything. Everywhere I have turned for help I have been refused, it's insulting – why did I have children. My daughter isn't going to the countryside (*na dachy*) because I haven't any money, but she needs fresh air, she's susceptible to tuberculosis after scarlet fever.”

In order to send her daughter to a summer camp for children, where she would have received better rations and had an opportunity to regain her health, Svirina attempted to fraudulently claim money from a bank against a coupon in a medal book. Svirina and the person from whom the medal book was obtained were both arrested.<sup>104</sup>

It is much harder to have sympathy with the veterans, like Mikhail Klimov with whom we started this chapter, who were accused of committing murders of exceptional violence. Although incidents where veterans took civilian lives had certainly not reached epidemic proportions, they were by no means uncommon. The frequency with which veterans were committing murder and the level of violence in these crimes was such that it would have attracted official concern, if not public outrage, in most societies. On 20 September 1945, for example, Viktor Kuzmin, a twenty-one year old disabled veteran, killed Larissa Domashnikova and her mother. According to the forensics report he stabbed Larissa nineteen times with a knife, and struck her mother around the head with a hatchet and stabbed her four times. Tragically, Viktor and Larissa had been engaged and Larissa was six months pregnant.<sup>105</sup> Such extreme violence was not an isolated occurrence. On 18 March 1947 in Aleksandrovka, a village thirty kilometres south of Leningrad, Alexandra Novikova, who was nine months pregnant, and her ten year old daughter were murdered. The killing was one of exceptional brutality. The scene of crime photographs preserved in the court record are not for the faint hearted. According to the investigation Andrei Akimov a twenty-five year old disabled veteran had hacked Novikova and her daughter to death with an axe, in order to steal the 1260 roubles he knew to be in her possession.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/ll.16-17.

<sup>105</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.8164/op.3/d.1102/ll.114-114ob, 131-131ob, 132-132ob, 187.

<sup>106</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2518/ll.64-65, 70-72.

A number of scenarios in which Leningrad's veterans might commit murder can be observed in the archival record. First, arguments between ex-servicemen and their acquaintances could escalate out of control. As with serving soldiers a drunken fight could have serious consequences. In January 1945 P.A. Demidovich an eighteen year old war-invalid was drawn into a fight at a factory social club, where he stabbed and killed a seventeen year old youth.<sup>107</sup> Revenge was another possible motive. Very occasionally police reports provide evidence of the *crime passionnel*. Vladimir Chernov was demobilized in early 1946. He returned to learn that his wife had been having an affair with a certain Kurakov for the past four years. At 01.00 on 15 January 1946 Chernov extracted his revenge on Kurakov by repeatedly stabbing him in the face and arm.<sup>108</sup> In all probability the numbers of such crimes was small. Even in Britain where the *News of the World* created hype around returning ex-servicemen killing or assaulting the errant wives or their lovers, the number of such incidents was very small.<sup>109</sup> Killings as a result of robberies that had been interrupted or which had gone wrong were a more common scenario. On 26 August 1945 the body of a security guard was found in a workshop at the Obuvshchik shoe factory. Footwear and leather valuing approximately 20,000 roubles were stolen. The police arrested A.A. Petushkov, a thirty-eight year old disabled veteran who confessed to both the theft and the murder.<sup>110</sup> In another example the bodies of a sixty-four year old woman and her twenty-three year old son were discovered in a burgled flat on Rizovskaia ulitsa on 4 May 1946. The police arrested N.S. Dmitriev a twenty-two year old war invalid.<sup>111</sup>

Several Leningrad historians have suggested, in an echo of the brutalization thesis, that the value of human life was diminished in veterans' eyes after having been exposed to mass death and extreme violence. They suggest that frontline service generated an uncompromising attitude amongst veterans, and a tendency to resolve personal conflict by intimidation or violence.<sup>112</sup> This is a much more radical vision of

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<sup>107</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/l.20.

<sup>108</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7179/op.53/d.132/l.3.

<sup>109</sup> Allport, *Demobbed*, p.84.

<sup>110</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.149/l.7.

<sup>111</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.186/l.61ob.

<sup>112</sup> Govorov, *Prestupnost' i bor'ba s nei v poslevoennom Leningrade*, p.20, 69; Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditismom v Leningrade', p.51, 79.

the impact of war that Amir Weiner's notion of 'assertive Ivan'.<sup>113</sup> Rather than stoutly defending their interests or arguing with desk rats they suggest that men accustomed to taking risks with their lives and channelling their aggressive impulses could very easily overstep the acceptable use of force. This, however, is unfair to Leningrad's veterans. It would be an egregious error to suggest that veterans returned with either an increased propensity to either petty or violent crime. Only a tiny minority of over 300,000 veterans settling in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast became involved in serious criminal activity, let alone violent murders. Indeed, veterans were more likely to become committed pacifists than violent offenders.<sup>114</sup> What was remarkable about veterans was the manner in which they succeeded in compartmentalizing their wartime past and rebuilding ordinary lives, rather than any potential brutalization.

Police reports are not sufficiently detailed to draw any definitive conclusions about the impact of combat and extreme violence upon Leningrad's veterans. As documents their function was to briefly describe the known facts of individual crimes and pass that information upwards to political leaders. They were not meticulous investigations of the circumstances and motives which drove ex-servicemen to take a life.

The court files preserved in the archives of the Leningrad Oblast and Leningrad City Courts are a more rewarding source. These documents examine individual crimes in great detail. In addition to the stenographic records of the trial, they contain charge sheets, scene of crime reports, witness statements, interrogation reports, psychiatric assessments, forensic evidence and appeals against sentences. Unlike police reports they offer relatively detailed biographical information about the defendant. In the case of veterans this includes details about their military careers, the circumstances of their demobilization and their progress in readjusting to civilian life. As part of the research for this thesis I have examined a sample of over twenty court files, drawn from the Leningrad city and oblast courts, where ex-servicemen were prosecuted under paragraph 167 of the criminal codex, pertaining to violent robberies which resulted in the death or serious injury of the victim.

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<sup>113</sup> Amir Weiner, 'Saving Private Ivan: From What, Why and How', *Kritika, Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.1, No.2 (Spring 2002), pp.305-36 (pp.317-20).

<sup>114</sup> On the involvement of veterans in Soviet peace campaigns and the role of traumatic memories of conflict in shaping attitudes towards peace see Timothy Johnston, 'Peace of Pacifism? The Soviet "Struggle For Peace in All the World", 1948-54', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.86, No.2 (April 2008), pp.257-82 (pp.274-79).

Although these documents represent the best source of information about the reality of crime amongst veterans, their use carries methodological difficulties. As highly ideological documents the reliability of court and investigation files must be questioned. Catriona Kelly, in reviewing the conduct of the investigation of the infamous murder of Pavlik Morozov, writes that investigating authorities, “were concerned with the need to underline the guilt of those who were already seen as guilty before the investigations began.”<sup>115</sup> A reading of these files creates a similar impression. Rather than attempting to establish guilt the purpose of these investigations was to collect, “incriminating evidence about individuals who had been identified as guilty from the outset...”<sup>116</sup> Given the standards of Soviet police investigations and judicial process it is inadvisable to immediately assume guilt. It is possible that violent attacks were pinned on disabled veterans unable to find work and engaged in a criminal sub-culture of petty theft and speculation. Despite these reservations court files, when considered against police reports, challenge the notion that veterans had been brutalized by wartime experiences.

On the morning of 15 December 1945 sixty-three year old Olena Stepanova was killed in the village of Aleksandrovka. Vasilli Budogorskii, Seman Mashkov and Pavel Maksimov, all veterans demobilized in October and November 1945, were tried for this bungling crime. After demobilization all three had failed to find work or permanent homes. Pavel Maksimov, the only native Leningrader amongst the group, had even neglected to make contact with his family.<sup>117</sup> This represented the nightmare scenario for demobilization planners. Avoiding the moderating influence of families and the socializing effect of the workplace all three drifted towards a criminal sub-culture centred on private trade at the city’s markets. Mashkov and Maksimov earned a living speculating in tokens for wine and tobacco and selling other items. On 10 December, according to the prosecution case, they met Budogorskii at the Mal’tevskii market and the three arranged to meet on the following day at Maksimov’s flat, in order to discuss “a little business”. At this meeting Mashkov proposed robbing a woman, with whom he was intimately acquainted, who lived with her mother in Aleksandrovka. Knowing that his girlfriend would be working on the night of 14 and 15 December and that only her

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<sup>115</sup> Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik. The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta, 2005), p.13.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77.

<sup>117</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2388/1.1, 140.

elderly mother would be at home Martinov proposed exploiting this opportunity to rob the property.

On the evening of 14 December the three veterans arrived in Aleksandrova. Knowing Mashkov from his affair with her daughter Stepanova let the three men in. Thinking that they wanted to wait for her daughter she offered them something to eat and a bottle of vodka to wash it down. The finger prints of all three men were left on the glasses and the bottle, and they absentmindedly left their train tickets behind. They were invited to stay the night. In the early hours of the morning they awoke and struck Stepanova a fatal blow with an axe to the back of the head. The gang then collected up valuable items from the property in a suitcase and returned to Leningrad.<sup>118</sup> During the course of the investigation it was revealed that this *modus operandi* was not a one off. Later in December 1945 Budogoskii befriended a woman living on Zagorodnii prospect and obtained a key from her. On 3 January 1946 he stole 1570 roubles worth of clothing from her wardrobe whilst she was out.<sup>119</sup>

This murder was far more typical of the circumstances in which veterans killed civilians than the example with which this chapter started. Mashkov, Maksimov and Budogoskii were not bloodthirsty trained killers unable to escape violent and murderous habits acquired in wartime. Although they set out with the intention of committing robbery, it was by no means certain that murder was pre-meditated. The trio were not criminal masterminds who had hatched a watertight plan, but rather incompetent petty thieves. Perhaps the most telling detail in this case was the choice of murder weapon. As the distinguished historian of crime Eric Monkkonen reminds us the choice of weapons can reveal a great deal about the nature of violent crime.<sup>120</sup> Stepanova was killed with a household object which came to the hand of her assailants, an axe which would have been used for chopping firewood.

For proponents of the brutalization thesis the fear of returning veterans was intensified by the knowledge that handguns, rifles, hand-grenades and bombs were finding their way back into civilian society.<sup>121</sup> It was for this reason that fears of

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<sup>118</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2388/II.266-67. For a discussion of the forensic evidence linking the accused to the crime scene see LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2388/II.190-2.

<sup>119</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2388/I.266ob.

<sup>120</sup> Monkkonen, *Murder In New York City*, pp.26-54.

<sup>121</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p.354.



brutalization have frequently led to tighter gun control. Post-war Leningrad was awash with lethal weapons. Between 1946 and 1949 the Leningrad police seized approximately 5500 guns, 2000 grenades, more than 160,000 rounds of ammunition, 1500 knives, 2000 artillery shells, 12 landmines and 17 kilograms of high-explosive.<sup>122</sup> It was not unusual for returning veterans to stash pistols or knives in their kitbags as mementos. Sometimes soldiers falling on hard times would hawk their weapons at Leningrad markets to make ready cash. Despite efforts to clear the region of mines and ordnance, rural areas were littered with discarded military hardware. The Leningrad police reported that groups of children travelled out of the city by suburban train returning with live shells and ammunition.<sup>123</sup> Weaponry was relatively easy to obtain. But, Leningrad's veterans were by and large not running amok with weaponry brought back from the frontlines or purchased on the black market. Klimov's calculated shooting of a lorry-driver to steal his Studebaker was the exception, rather than the rule. Veterans committing murder tended to use items that came to hand. As Monkkonen writes; "Most murderers used whatever was handy, including hands, feet, sticks, rocks, chairs, and combinations of all of them."<sup>124</sup> This same principle appears to have applied to ex-servicemen in Leningrad as well as New York City's criminals.

Other case files confirm the impression that some veterans were turning to crime out of necessity rather than blood-lust or a desire for riches. David Sokolov was demobilized in December 1944 on the grounds of invalidity; he was aged thirty-three. On his return to Leningrad he temporarily lived with his mother in a communal apartment on Saratovskaia ulitsa. Officially he was registered as having no employment and no fixed abode. He supported himself by robbing apartments in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast.<sup>125</sup> In an official appeal to his sentence Sokolov claimed that he had been forced into crime by his inability to work, his disability, and because of poverty. In hope of reducing his sentence he pleaded; "I am not a depraved person, I can still be a useful person in the grand project of building socialist society." In hope of clemency he listed his employment history, details of his military career and the medals he had been

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<sup>122</sup> Samarin, 'Bor'ba s banditismom v Leningrade', p.57.

<sup>123</sup> TsGA SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.148/ll.77-77ob.

<sup>124</sup> Monkkonen, *Murder In New York City*, p.49.

<sup>125</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.8134/op.3/d.1022/ll.198-201.

awarded.<sup>126</sup> Veterans were not only the perpetrators of criminal offences; in many cases they were also victims of a cruel set of circumstances which pushed them towards desperate actions. In many instances veterans tried under article 167 of the criminal codex were unemployed war-invalids, who had come to Leningrad from neighbouring regions, but had been unable to find work and had resorted to crime.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of court files are the glimpses they offer into the psychological and psychiatric states of the accused. In a handful of cases suspects were referred to psychiatrists for examination. Thanks to recent research by the historian Dan Healey we know something about Soviet approaches to forensic psychiatry, particularly in the 1920s and early 1930s. The primary function of courtroom psychiatrists was to assess whether defendants could be held criminally responsible (*vmeniaemyi*) for their actions, and whether they were fit to stand trial. Leningrad was at the cutting edge of efforts to introduce psychiatric assessment in Soviet legal practice. Leningrad in the 1920s, unlike minor Russian cities, had its own institute devoted solely to the study of legal psychiatry; the Lenin Diagnostic Institute of Forensic Neurology and Psychiatry, funded by the local branch of the Commissariat of Public Health.<sup>127</sup> It was staff from the successor bodies to this institute which assessed the criminal responsibility (*vmeniaemost'*) of veterans committing violent crimes in the late 1940s. Leningrad's status as the centre of Soviet medical science, particularly in the field of psychiatry and neuro-psychology, reveals insights into the minds of ex-servicemen which might have gone unnoticed in other locations. Of course, the modest selection of psychiatric examinations explored in my sample can not claim to be representative of veterans as a whole, but they do suggest that mental trauma connected to wartime service was a contributing factor to many crimes.

War invalids, particularly those who had suffered head wounds or some form of shell-shock (*voennaia kontuziia*) appear to have been especially likely to undergo psychiatric examination. In the five cases in my sample where veterans underwent psychiatric examination the accused had suffered from shell-shock. In two cases the level of trauma was severe. Andrei Akimov, for example, had spent six weeks in an

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<sup>126</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.8134/op.3/d.1022/l.262.

<sup>127</sup> Dan Healey, 'Early Soviet Forensic Psychiatric Approaches to Sex Crime, 1917-1934', in Britlinger and Vinitsky (eds), *Madness and the Mad*, pp.150-71. On the concept of *vmeniaemost'* see Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia. The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago, IL., London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), p.175.

evacuation hospital after a head injury.<sup>128</sup> Vasilli Krymov spent three months in an evacuation hospital, between June and September 1943 suffering from “a functional disturbance of the nervous system” and hysterical reaction. He spent a further three months between June and September 1944 in a psychiatric clinic with a diagnosis of “sharply pronounced psychopathy.”<sup>129</sup> In all of these cases it is unclear whether it was previous medical history or self-evident psychic disturbances which prompted the intervention of a psychiatrist.

All of these ex-servicemen were suffering from psychiatric difficulties in one form or another. After having been shelled in July 1944 Gerasimov began to suffer convulsive fits. According to his description of these attacks it became difficult to breathe, his emotions became heightened, he became easily upset and would often breakdown in tears. These problems persisted after his demobilization in October 1945.<sup>130</sup> Other cases alluded to the after effects of *kontuziia* and the influence of alcohol. One veteran who was regularly consuming excessive quantities of alcohol required half a litre of vodka before he became drunk.<sup>131</sup> Psychiatrists also considered that Klimov had a problem with alcohol. Although he often drunk just 100 grams, he was also capable of consuming several glasses of vodka. Tellingly the word used for glass was tumbler (*stakan*), rather than shot-glass (*riumka*). The consumption of excessive quantities of alcohol and ex-servicemen disappearing on benders lasting days was a feature of many of these reports. Of course heavy drinking was part of the culture of army life and a symbol of Russian masculinity. It was something that former soldiers who had navigated the transition back into civilian life also indulged in. Yet, vodka was not just a means of relaxation, it was also a means of numbing physical, emotional and psychological pain; a form of self-medication.

This is perhaps best illustrated by Alexei Kravchenko. In October 1945 he became involved in a fight with a fellow disabled veteran killing him in the process. The details and circumstances of the crime are of secondary importance to the discussion of Kravchenko’s mental health in the trial proceedings. He had been called up for military service at the start of the war, and miraculously survived the carnage. He

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<sup>128</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2518/ll.171-72.

<sup>129</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.8134/op.3/d.1002/ll.114-114ob.

<sup>130</sup> TsGA-SPb/f.8134/op.3/d.1025/ll.161-161ob.

<sup>131</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2468/ll.52-53.

suffered a catalogue of injuries. In 1941 he had lost four toes on his right foot to frostbite. In 1943 he was wounded in the shoulder, and in both 1944 and 1945 he had been shell-shocked. After the first instance he began to suffer fits and to occasionally lose consciousness. He also began to experience heightened emotions. He often reacted aggressively, and found relating to other people increasingly difficult. During the trial it was revealed that he spent a month in a psychiatric hospital in Moscow after his second attack of shell-shock. Before his medical discharge from the army he had been disciplined several times for provoking fights. He also began to drink heavily as a means of self-medication. He described, in his own words, how everyday he drank at least 200 grams of vodka. He estimated that he needed to consume 300 to 400 grams of vodka before he started to feel intoxicated. On the day he killed his victim he estimated that he had drunk 800 grams of vodka. He explained that alcohol helped relieve the pain he felt in his head, but that when drunk he became aggressive and hot-tempered. More remarkably he described how drinking prompted self-harming. On two separate occasions he had cut his own chest. There was no indication in the court record how serious these injuries were, or whether Kravchenko was suicidal.<sup>132</sup>

It seems undeniable that many veterans committing crimes were suffering from war-trauma. Some of the descriptions of increased arousal, hyper-vigilance, irritability, angry outbursts, difficulty concentrating and the abuse of alcohol are consistent with the typical symptoms of PTSD.<sup>133</sup> All of the psychiatric examinations, despite sometimes acknowledging psychiatric problems, concluded that the accused were fit to stand trial and had been in control of their actions at the time of the crime. Doctors were unwilling to exculpate ex-servicemen for their crimes on the basis of mental trauma. In the course of the 1930s attitudes towards forensic psychiatry hardened. The discipline came under criticism for offering a soft option to criminals. Patients in the 1920s allegedly knew enough about psychiatric discourse to make articulate appeals for psychiatric assessment, in the hope of obtaining the sympathy of specialists.<sup>134</sup> If veterans had drawn attention to experiences of being shell-shocked and traumatic experiences in hope of obtaining leniency they were to be disappointed. Mental trauma was given

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<sup>132</sup> LOGAV/f.R-3820/op.2/d.2403/ll.96, 109-11, 140, 145, 147-47ob., 150.

<sup>133</sup> On the symptoms of PTSD see Förster and Beck, 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and World War II', p.17.

<sup>134</sup> Healey, 'Early Soviet Forensic Psychiatric Approaches to Sex Crime', pp.157-60.

short-shrift in Leningrad generally, but its contribution to crime amongst veterans was ignored.

### **The Lack of Fears About Brutalization**

The experience of killing, wholesale destruction and mass death had a profound impact on the lives of Leningrad's veterans, but not in the ways the 'Brutalization Thesis' or 'Violent Veteran Model' predicts. The behaviour of the Red Army within and beyond Soviet borders both during and after the Great Patriotic War was often violent, murderous and destructive. Yet, even in one of the most extreme examples of the violence of twentieth-century warfare there was no wholesale brutalization of combatants. Of course ex-servicemen contributed to the wave of crime which swept post-war Leningrad and late Stalinist society. Police reports and court records demonstrate that a minority of veterans were deeply involved in the shadow economy centred on Leningrad's markets either speculating in deficit items or selling stolen goods. An even smaller number were involved in bandit gangs terrorizing Leningrad's rural periphery, or in a variety of circumstances were committing violent crimes amongst themselves and wider society. A close examination of the evidence reveals that even the most brutal crimes committed by returning veterans were rarely the actions of bloodthirsty trained killers caught in a downwards spiral of violence. Crimes were more commonly the product of failed demobilizations. Impoverishment, traumatic reactions to wartime experiences, and the failure of veterans, especially the war disabled, to reintegrate into mainstream civilian life provide more robust explanations for veterans' involvement in crime.

What was remarkable about Leningrad's veterans was not the violence they visited upon a society which seemed indifferent to the difficulties former soldiers faced in resuming ordinary lives, but their ability to compartmentalize their wartime experiences. During wartime soldiers were required to kill, behave violently and to channel their aggressive impulses. Once they were discharged from the military most ex-servicemen did as propaganda encouraged, and drew a line under the wartime chapter of their lives. In this instance at least ideology and propaganda appear to have had the desired effect. The message that the war was a struggle to the death between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had constantly been pumped into the minds of Red Army soldiers and Soviet civilians. Leningrad's veterans had repeatedly been exhorted to avenge the destruction of their city and the murder of its inhabitants. Like all Soviet

soldiers they were encouraged to kill their enemy as a patriotic duty. In order to defend the nation, Soviet power and above all their families virtually anything could be justified. Violence deployed in the name of defeating the fascist invaders was entirely legitimate. The belief that soldiers were fighting for a noble cause absolved soldiers of fears that they had been damaged by extreme wartime violence, or any guilt about their actions.

Clearly Leningrad's veterans experienced many of the same difficulties in readjusting to civilian life as their counterparts in other societies. Why then were Leningraders and wider Soviet society untroubled by the arrival of ex-servicemen skilled in killing and accustomed to violence? The absence of either popular or official fears about the brutalization of ex-servicemen clearly distinguished Leningrad and its hinterland from European and North American societies after 1945. A number of factors help explain why Leningrad departed from the experience of other post-war societies. Prevailing social and cultural attitudes towards violence in late Stalinist society form part of the explanation. Equally important, if not more so, were local factors unique to this region.

Discussions about the conduct of war and soldiers' behaviour create highly charged moral, political and emotional debates in any society. But, confronting these issues within the 'totalitarian' constraints of Stalinism was particularly difficult. Public expression was highly regulated through a complex interaction of state and social forces which placed a number of highly sensitive issues off limits. Soviet society had no public forum, or private back channels, through which the effects of wartime violence could be discussed. Against the backdrop of the all-pervasive propaganda rhetoric of victory, heroism and liberation public discussion of brutalization was unthinkable. Propaganda combined with the ossifying official memory of the war prevented any speculation about the long-term effects of violence on either individual soldiers or wider society. A collective silence quickly enveloped the violent reality of frontline service. These heroic myths were not simply imposed from above. The language of the official cult of the Great Patriotic War enabled ex-servicemen and civilians to elide uncomfortable aspects of wartime service and repress darker memories of the war.<sup>135</sup>

The same was also true about violent crime in Leningrad after 1945. The shocking crimes which appear in the archival record were not dissected in local

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<sup>135</sup> Merridale, 'Culture, Ideology and Combat in the Red Army', pp.207-9.

newspapers or journals for evidence of the brutalizing effects of war. A reluctance to discuss crime in the public arena had not always been a feature of the local press. In September 1926, for example, Soviet newspapers reported details of a horrific crime committed in Leningrad's backstreets. A gang of drunken youths returning from a funeral, including Komsomol members, gang raped a woman near an empty building plot near Chubarov Alley. The case received an astonishing level of national and local coverage, becoming the focus of intense journalistic attention. The reporting of the so-called Chubarov Alley affair was not exclusively about the violence of the rape. The story came to prominence because it coincided with a national campaign against hooliganism. Against the background of internecine party warfare between Moscow and Leningrad in the mid 1920s, this incident became a political weapon used to discredit Leningrad's party and Komsomol. Images and ideas of Saint Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad as a corrupting social force, well established in Russian public culture, were repeatedly called upon to bolster ideas of the degeneracy of the Leningrad party.<sup>136</sup>

There was nothing comparable to the outpouring of outrage provoked by this case in the reporting of violent crime in Leningrad in the late 1940s. Yet, the parallel with the 1920s is an important one. Both periods marked high points in the strained relationship between Moscow and Leningrad. In Stalin's last years these tensions manifested themselves in an attack on Leningrad's writers and the city's cultural élite in 1946 and a political purge of the Leningrad party in 1949. Moscow was searching for ways to rein in Leningrad's sense of independence and the local identities formed by the blockade. Although Moscow was looking for reasons to attack Leningrad it did not resort to exploiting violent crime committed by veterans, including party members, to discredit the city and its political leaders. Perhaps any public discussion of the reality of post-war criminality, even when tightly constrained in a political campaign, was too explosive for a community attempting to repress its traumatic wartime past.

The limits of public expression in Stalinist society provide only part of the explanation for the lack of fears amongst Leningraders that veterans had been brutalized by war. Late Stalinist society had very different social, cultural and political attitudes towards violence than either post 1945 Britain or America. First, Stalinism was a more militaristic society with strong pre-established notions about the redemptive qualities of military service. In late Tsarist Russia and early Soviet society, as Sandborn argues, the

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<sup>136</sup> Naiman, *Sex in Public*, pp.250-88. On the image of the city as a corrupting social force see Neuberger, *Hooliganism. Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg 1900-1914*.

army was an important institution in the teaching of masculine virtues, such as courage, selflessness and discipline, as well as qualities like loyalty and obedience crucial in “drafting the nation”.<sup>137</sup> From the Red Army’s creation during the Revolution and Civil War it played an important socio-political role as a “school of socialism”, particularly in the ongoing project to bring Soviet power to the village.<sup>138</sup> The idea that military service offered a unique form of martial and moral training was neither new nor entirely Russian or Soviet, think for a moment about Britain’s continuing obsession with bringing back national service, but in a highly militarised society it had greater power.

Secondly, Stalinist society was the product of war, revolution, civil war, famine, forced collectivization and industrialisation and successive waves of political violence. Violence was not confined to crisis periods. It was integral to the functioning of the entire system. Bolshevism openly gloried in the rhetoric of revolutionary violence, depicting it as a force capable of cleansing, renewing and remodelling revolutionary society.<sup>139</sup> As Sandborn writes; “Violence loomed large in the imagining and practices of the national political community.”<sup>140</sup> Stalinism was a classic example of what Gerlach terms “extremely violent societies.” Not only did it exhibit a general culture of and massive levels of physical violence, violence was directed a number of different victim groups and was participatory in nature. Violence in Stalinist society was the interrelated product of entrenched social attitudes, economic factors, deeply rooted social conflicts, class civil war, external conflicts, ethnic violence and selective social policies.<sup>141</sup> As Edele and Geyer argue, “the experience of unfettered violence formed the mental background”, to the Soviet war-effort. But, this conflict represented an escalation in Soviet experiences of violence. Brutality was part of the war’s grammar, part of a system of wartime violence.<sup>142</sup> Given its past and more recent experience of

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<sup>137</sup> Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

<sup>138</sup> Mark Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship. The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930* (Ithaca, NY., London: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>139</sup> Peter Holquist, ‘Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism? Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905-21’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.4 No.3 (Summer 2003), pp.627-52.

<sup>140</sup> Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation*, p.199.

<sup>141</sup> Christian Gerlach, ‘Extremely Violent Societies: An Alternative to the Concept of Genocide’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol.8, No.4 (December 2006), pp.455-71.

<sup>142</sup> Mark Edele and Michael Geyer, ‘States of Exception: The Nazi Soviet War as a System of Violence, 1939-1945’, in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds), *Beyond Totalitarianism. Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.345-395 (p.362).



violence, late Stalinist society may have developed more durable frameworks for dealing with wartime violence and its painful legacies.

The key to the absence of fears about brutalization in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast lies in the region's unique wartime experience. The blockade shaped the city and its inhabitants in ways which did not apply to other Soviet regions. During the blockade Leningraders had been forced to confront the social threat of crime long before former soldiers began arriving in the region. Official propaganda celebrated the heroic stoicism of besieged Leningraders. Nevertheless, crime and fear of crime grew amongst the rubble and confusion of the wartime city. Ravaged by fighting, depopulated by mobilization, evacuation and mass death, cut off from central control from the Soviet "mainland" and crippled by extreme shortages of food and everyday commodities the blockaded city was a space in which crime flourished. Heroism and criminality co-existed. As the celebrated scholar and blockade survivor Dmitrii Likhachev wrote; "At every step one encounters villainy and nobility, extreme selfishness and self-sacrifice, thieving and honesty."<sup>143</sup> For Likhachev, like many others, the blockade stripped people's characters bare revealing their true selves; "Some turned out to be marvellous, incomparable heroes, others – scoundrels, villains, murderers, cannibals."<sup>144</sup>

During the siege Leningraders, just like disabled veterans following their demobilization, frequently had little choice but to resort to crime. Driven out of their minds with hunger, especially during the winter of 1941-42 the theft of a loaf of bread or a ration card became a means of survival. Extreme shortages of food, clothing and everyday necessities combined with weak points in their supply and distribution created opportunities for organised theft and speculation. Robberies of shops, warehouses and supply vehicles by organized criminal gangs were common. In 1942 alone NKVD troops responsible for protecting goods in transit detained 10,170 thieves, preventing 5094 thefts and recovering 105,584 kilograms of stolen goods.<sup>145</sup> The desperation of starvation combined with the profits that could be obtained from the sale of stolen good or ration cards could also lead to violence. Murder for food became a regular

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<sup>143</sup> Dmitrii Sergeevich Likhachev, *Reflections on the Russian Soul. A Memoir*, trans. by Bernard Adams (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2000), p.238.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.244.

<sup>145</sup> Boris Belozerov, 'Crime During the Siege', in Barber and Dzeniskevich (eds), *Life and Death in Besieged Leningrad*, pp.213-28 (p.221).

occurrence. In the first half of 1942 a total of 1216 people were arrested for killing or planning to kill individuals for their ration cards.<sup>146</sup> Worse still were the reports of cannibalism. Between October 1941 and February 1943 approximately 1979 people were arrested for cannibalism. 494 of these cases were recorded in the first half of February 1942.<sup>147</sup> For outsiders these crimes have become symbolic of the hunger, poverty and violence of the blockade. On the whole these crimes were not committed by hardened criminals but ordinary people driven to robbery and murder by hunger. While foreign historians have been intrigued by the incidence of cannibalism, most Leningraders preferred to cling to the collective myths about Leningrad as an undefeated city united by the experience of extreme suffering.<sup>148</sup>

Those Leningraders who had remained in the besieged city throughout the blockade and even those who were evacuated from the city had also been on the frontlines in the struggle against Nazi Germany. Their struggle for survival in defiance of threats to wipe Leningrad from the face of the earth were heroic, but required many to make similar moral choices and compromises as *frontoviki*. Leningraders did not question whether soldiers had been brutalized by what they had seen and done on the frontlines, because any such speculation would prompt a secondary question: how far had Leningraders themselves been brutalized by the blockade? This after all was a situation in which people had resorted to desperate measures to survive, including in isolated cases cannibalism. The reality of life in the blockaded city was far too painful to be raked over in public. The blockade and its true effects on Leningraders' lives were buried deep in the recesses of survivor's minds. Leningraders did not question whether soldiers had been brutalized on the frontlines, because they knew for themselves that they had not been brutalized by their experiences in the blockaded city.

Demobilization in Leningrad brought a series of added complexities for returning veterans. The legacy of the blockade meant that ex-servicemen found great difficulty obtaining housing. Their sense of entitlement was forced to compete with that of blockade survivors, who could lay equal claim to jobs, housing, healthcare and other municipal services. In many ways demobilization in Leningrad was more difficult than in regions where veterans were more privileged. Yet there were compensating factors.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp.222-23.

<sup>147</sup> Ivanov, "'Skorpiony': Korruptsiia v poslevoennom Leningrade', p.240; Belozerov, 'Crime During the Siege', p.223; Likhachev, *Reflections on the Russian Soul*, pp.234-35.

<sup>148</sup> Salisbury, *The 900 Days*, p.447; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.238-46.

Ex-servicemen returning to Leningrad joined a community that understood the horrors, traumas and pain of modern warfare better than most. Leningraders were less willing to judge veterans for their conduct during war, since they themselves intimately understood what modern warfare entailed. Therefore Leningrad's ex-servicemen were not treated with the same suspicion as their former allies in Britain or America. They were spared a public culture which expected them to return as broken men with violent and criminal tendencies. The process of mass demobilization was poisoned by bureaucracy, corruption and material shortage, not by public fears that soldiers who had sacrificed their lives had been brutalized by war.

### **Conclusion**

Nowhere were the changes unleashed by the Great Patriotic War more apparent than amongst the Leningrad's ruins or the burnt-out abandoned villages in the surrounding countryside. The impact of the war was not only measured in terms of buildings destroyed, lives lost and bodies shattered but also a partial breakdown in the social order. Returning veterans were disorientated by rising crime and the emergence of a less stable and less socially cohesive post-war society. Yet the behaviour of Leningrad's veterans was not beyond reproach. Veterans unable to 'find their place' in civilian life were responsible for a measure of crime, hooliganism, vagrancy and socially disruptive behaviour. However, the role of veterans in the post-war crime wave was not discussed by contemporaries and has subsequently been hidden from the official public narratives of the past. Involvement in crime was not the same as brutalization. Even in the most violent crimes other factors provide more convincing explanations for veterans' actions. The lack of concern about brutalization, in stark contrast to the experience of other twentieth century post-war societies, reveals something about the social and cultural attitudes to violence, as well as the fault lines running through post-blockade Leningrad.

## **Chapter 5: Leningrad's Veterans - Politics and Memory**

This chapter examines the relationship between demobilized veterans and post-war politics in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast. Without doubt the Great Patriotic War had a profound effect on Soviet soldiers' mentalities. In attempting to resume ordinary civilian life veterans would have to readjust their mindsets to new post-war realities. As part of this process many ex-servicemen reconsidered their relationship with Soviet politics. The chapter attempts to reassess the commonly held myths about the relationship between ex-servicemen and post-war politics. It challenges the established notions that veterans were either opponents of the regime or convinced Stalinists. Most veterans held political views somewhere in between these two polarized positions. Veterans in Leningrad and its rural periphery were much less interested in organized party politics than historians have previously argued. The chapter also attempts to establish a link between the state's suspicions towards veterans as a potential source of opposition and their role as a repository of local wartime memory. The battle over local wartime memory played a significant role in Leningrad's post-war politics. Throughout late Stalinism post-war politics and Leningraders' memories of the war were closely interwoven. Veterans' chances of readapting to post-war lives and the re-imposition of centralized political control depended to a very large extent on veterans' abilities to constrain wartime memories at odds with official patriotic myths.

### **Leningrad: Site of Political Opposition and Stalinist Repression**

Leningrad offers a unique vantage point from which to study the attempt to create ordinary citizens from demobilized veterans with extraordinary wartime experiences. As demonstrated in previous chapters Leningrad was a key location in mass demobilization. More veterans were demobilized in the 'northern capital' than any other major Soviet city. Former soldiers from across the Soviet Union, not just native Leningraders, were drawn to the city. Despite the shadow of mass death and wartime destruction, and perhaps even because of it, Leningrad seemed to offer the prospect of a better life. Post-war Leningrad was not a provincial backwater, as some scholars suggest, but a Hero City, with a proud revolutionary heritage and unique cultural tradition.<sup>1</sup> The opportunity to contribute to the myth of Leningrad's phoenix-like rebirth, and the possibilities of work and housing that this created, added to the city's

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<sup>1</sup> Ruble, 'The Leningrad Affair', pp. 301-20.

attractions. Leningrad's status as a centre of Soviet science, particularly medicine, exerted a further pull on disabled veterans. Many hoped, albeit mistakenly, that Leningrad would be able to provide the medical care they required and deserved. The presence of leading academic institutions researching prosthetics, military psychiatry and the employability of disabled veterans cast the difficulties of post-war readjustment into sharper focus. Although support was inadequate and frequently non-existent, Leningrad's psychiatric and psychological researchers did identify cases of trauma amongst veterans. In other places, without this scientific infrastructure, trauma was even more likely to go unidentified or be ignored. Veterans' experience of demobilization and post-war readjustment in and around Leningrad was not typical of a wider Soviet story, but it does highlight aspects that have been written out of the standard narrative of demobilization.

Leningrad is an important location for studying veterans' post-war readjustment for one further reason; namely the city's uneasy relationship with central government in Moscow. Tension between the 'northern capital' and Russia's spiritual heartland in Moscow was nothing new. It dated back to Saint Petersburg's foundation in the summer of 1703. The two cities have been presented as diametric opposites ever since. The literary myth of Petersburg, generated by writers such as Gogol, Pushkin and Bely, deliberately contrasted the alien European cultural influences of the new capital with the genuinely Russian and national character of Moscow. Over the course of over 300 years of rivalry the two cities have been presented as mirror images of each other. This supposed opposition became central to the ideological arguments between Westernizers and Slavophiles in nineteenth century. Petersburg became the model for the Westernizers' vision of European progress, while Slavophiles idealized Moscow as embodiment of a true national character.<sup>2</sup>

The Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 and the decision to transfer the capital back to Moscow in March 1918 reversed the relationship between Moscow and Petrograd. Moscow became the imperial capital, the centre of power and the model for a new socialist society. The dynamic between the two cities shifted but the rivalry continued. Petrograd/Leningrad, with its proud revolutionary and industrial heritage, would become the centre of opposition with the party. Under Grigorii Zinoviev's leadership the city and the surrounding region reinforced its status as one of the Soviet

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<sup>2</sup> On this rivalry see Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance. A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), pp.155-71.

Union's leading economic and industrial regions. In 1925 the Leningrad party and Zinoviev openly opposed the party Central Committee in Moscow and Stalin's policies.<sup>3</sup> Zinoviev was replaced in December 1925 by Sergei Kirov. Kirov's popularity in the early 1930s raised the possibility that he might emerge as a challenger to Stalin's pre-eminence. The cycle of purges which followed Kirov's assassination on 1 December 1934 fell particularly heavily upon the membership of the Leningrad party and the city's intellectual and cultural elite.<sup>4</sup>

The tense relationship between Leningrad and Moscow was recalibrated once again as a result of the Great Patriotic War. A shift in the balance of power between regional cities with a strong tradition of particularism and their capitals was by no means uncommon in twentieth-century Europe. Manchester or Munich, for example, which like Leningrad partially defined themselves against the capital, found that during wartime the political and legal reach of the administrative centre grew exponentially at the perceived expense of local interests.<sup>5</sup> In Leningrad, however, the unique circumstances of the blockade shifted power in the opposite direction; from the capital to local decision makers. Isolation from the Soviet 'mainland' and the difficulties of regular communication during the worst days of the blockade thrust Leningraders and their local political leaders on their own resources and initiative. As a consequence Leningrad's administrators were presented with an unusual degree of autonomy for a highly centralized authoritarian political system. Leningrad's nationally important industrial sector, for example, which was usually tightly regulated by Moscow, came almost exclusively under the control of the local party hierarchy. While centralized control was temporarily weakened the blockade fostered a renewed sense of civic pride and local patriotism. Many Leningraders believed that their sacrifices and determination had ensured their city's survival. From Moscow's perspective this nascent sense of local identity, strengthened in adversity, was a direct affront to centralized political control.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On the fissure between the Leningrad and Moscow party organisations see Clayton Black, 'Party Crisis and the Factory Shop Floor: Krasnyi Putilovets and the Leningrad Opposition, 1925-26', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.46, No.1 (January 1994), pp.107-26.

<sup>4</sup> For an analysis of the extent of the Great Terror in Leningrad see Melanie Ilic, 'The Great Terror in Leningrad: a Quantitative Analysis', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.52, No.8 (December 2000), pp.1513-34.

<sup>5</sup> Seipp, *The Ordeal of Peace*, pp.14-15.

<sup>6</sup> Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.141-42; Benjamin Tromly, 'The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics, 1949-1950', *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol.56, No.5 (July 2004), pp.707-29 (p.715); Service, *Stalin*, p.535; Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (London, Allen Lane, 2007), p.460.

This situation could not be allowed to persist for long. Although wartime propaganda harnessed local loyalties as a means of mobilizing and motivating soldiers and citizens, Leningrad's spirit of independence soon came under attack.<sup>7</sup> The long historical background of rivalry between the two capitals, and Stalin's own perception of Leningrad as a source of political opposition, help explain why the city's post-war history was so closely interwoven with the course of late Stalinist high politics. Indeed, Leningrad was a target of Moscow's attempts to reassert political authority after a series of pragmatic wartime relaxations. In 1946 the city played an important part in the beginnings of the *Zhdanovshchina*, a campaign to strengthen ideological and cultural orthodoxy. In 1949 Leningrad provided the location for late Stalinism's single most murderous political purge and the first blood purge of the political élite since 1939; the so called Leningrad Affair. These events are part of what makes Leningrad such an important vantage point from which to examine demobilization and post-war readjustment. In addition to the myriad difficulties of adapting to civilian life in a community devastated by war, political repression was a constant backdrop to demobilization.

The first major attack against post-war Leningrad came in August 1946 with a public castigation of two prominent and popular Leningrad based journals, *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. This spelled the end of a transitional period, since the lifting of the blockade, when Leningrad's sense of local patriotism had gone virtually unchallenged. But, Stalin had not forgotten that portraits of Zhdanov had almost been as plentiful as his own in the blockaded city, and that popular Leningrad leaders had caused him difficulties in the past.<sup>8</sup> Yet, as Zubkova reminds us the spirit of freedom fostered by the war did not evaporate immediately, but remained a counterweight to attempts to recreate the pre-war political order.<sup>9</sup> On 14 August 1946 the Party Central Committee in Moscow published a resolution which criticized *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* for serious ideological irregularities. Two days later at a meeting of the Leningrad branch of the writer's union Andrei Zhdanov, First Secretary of the Leningrad party between 1934 and 1944, launched a vitriolic attack on Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko, two Leningrad writers with strong links to both journals. The speech became notorious for

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<sup>7</sup> Kirschenbaum, "Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families", pp.825-47.

<sup>8</sup> Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, p.142.

<sup>9</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.19.

humiliating two of the period's most gifted writers, embodiments of the Petersburg spirit, in the crudest and most intolerant manner. This formed the start of the *Zhdanovshchina*, literally time of Zhdanov, a campaign which forever linked Zhdanov's name with intolerance and cultural persecution.<sup>10</sup>

The *Zhdanovshchina* is usually understood as a xenophobic anti-Western campaign, targeting the intelligentsia's hopes for a more liberal form of government and freer expression. In practice its causes were more complicated. Factional infighting in Stalin's inner circle played its part. As Gorlizki and Khlevniuk have argued the choice of Leningrad targets was almost certainly Stalin's, and was designed to place Zhdanov in an awkward position. "Attacking Leningrad-based institutions, and especially the Leningrad party, which was inevitably implicated in the running of the journals, could only sully his (Zhdanov's) own reputation as a political overlord... Attacking his old bailiwick was an embarrassment for Zhdanov and ran against his personal interests."<sup>11</sup> The denunciation of Akhmatova and Zoshchenko also damaged the credibility of the Leningrad party, which had authorized publication of *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*.<sup>12</sup>

The local aspects of the *Zhdanovshchina* were also important. The attack on Leningrad writers and journals was not just criticism of servility to Western culture, but also a challenge to the memory of the blockade and local wartime identities. Literature had played an important part in creating the myth of Leningrad's heroic defence and fostering local patriotism. It was significant that writers and journals which had played an important part in portraying Leningrad and the blockade in terms other than those constantly repeated in the sterile official propaganda were singled out for criticism. Cultural politics were being used as a mechanism to repress local memories and enforce an official narrative of the war, which allowed no room for expressing the enormity of Leningrad's wartime suffering.<sup>13</sup> A challenge to local particularities was not unique to Leningrad: the *Zhdanovshchina* also targeted non-Russian Slavic and Central Asian

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Werth, *Russia: The Post-war Years* (New York: Taplinger, 1971), pp.202-9 (p.204) Also quoted in Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, p.32-33.

<sup>11</sup> Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, pp.33.

<sup>12</sup> David Brandenberger, 'Stalin, the Leningrad Affair, and the Limits of Postwar Russocentrism', *Russian Review*, Vol.63 No.2 (April 2004), pp.241-55 (p.245 note 18).

<sup>13</sup> On the role of literature in fostering wartime identities in Leningrad see Aileen G. Rambow, 'The Siege of Leningrad: Wartime Literature and Ideological Change', in Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetsch (eds), *The People's War. Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union* (Urbana, Chicago, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp.154-70; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, p.142.



historical narratives.<sup>14</sup> But, an attack on what could and couldn't be said about wartime experience was particularly painful for proud Leningraders.

The origins of the Leningrad Affair are more complicated. As Bidlack argues the Leningrad Affair, "is one of the greatest enduring mysteries of Soviet high politics of the post-World War II era." All explanations for this purge contain an element of conjecture, especially given the lack of surviving archival evidence.<sup>15</sup> Historians disagree about what precisely prompted the purge. According to the established narrative history, the Leningrad Affair was engineered and exploited by Malenkov and Beria as a means of eliminating upstart rivals with links to Leningrad, who had been protected by Zhdanov until his death in late August 1948. In a refinement of this position Tromly has argued that the affair was an attempt to break up a local patron-client network of Leningrad-based officials who had established themselves and accumulated power in the wartime and early post-war period.<sup>16</sup> Other historians, most notably Brandenberger, have emphasised the ideological rather than political circumstances of the affair. He argues that rumours of the formation of a Russian Communist party and of elevating Leningrad to the capital of the RSFSR raised the prospect of an ideological rift within the party. According to this view the purge was Stalin's response to the threat of Russian nationalism acquiring an institutional base in Leningrad.<sup>17</sup> Other historians have questioned whether Leningraders were seriously advocating a Russian nationalist agenda, and have suggested that accusations of a regional conspiracy reflected Stalin's own fears rather than reality.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the precise weighting of factional and ideological reasons, the Leningrad affair, like the *Zhdanovshchina*, had a local dimension. Thirty-six members of the Leningrad city and oblast party committees and soviet executive committees were

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<sup>14</sup> Serhy Yekelchuk, 'Celebrating the Soviet Present. The Zhdanovshchina Campaign in Ukrainian Literature and the Arts', in Raleigh (ed.), *Provincial Landscapes*, pp.255-75 and David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism. Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp.190-6.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Bidlack, 'Ideological or Political Origins of the Leningrad Affair? A Response to David Brandenberger', *Russian Review*, Vol.64, No.1 (January 2005), pp.90-95.

<sup>16</sup> Tromly, 'The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics'.

<sup>17</sup> Brandenberger, 'Stalin, the Leningrad Affair, and the Limits of Postwar Russocentrism'; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, p.143; Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, p.254.

<sup>18</sup> Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, p.89, Service, *Stalin*, p.536.

convicted as a result of the purge.<sup>19</sup> In total approximately 2000 people lost their jobs as a result of the purge, the majority of whom had close links to Leningrad, although patronage politics had taken some Leningraders to Novgorod, Stalingrad even the Crimea.<sup>20</sup> The purge also spread beyond politics and became enmeshed with the cultural crackdown. It extended beyond Leningrad party functionaries with patron-client links to Zhdanov, Kuznetsov or Voznesenskii to include figures linked to the blockaded city. The Leningrad Affair simultaneously removed the perceived threat of political opposition, and attacked local wartime myths and memories which conflicted with official propaganda.<sup>21</sup> Expression in the visual arts, music, poetry and prose were further restricted, the output of Leningrad's celebrated film studios was limited and the dean of the Leningrad State University was removed from office.<sup>22</sup>

The link between local memory and alleged political threat was more than coincidence. Of particular significance was the manner in which the Museum of the Defence of Leningrad was drawn into the purge. The museum had grown out of a smaller exhibition entitled, "The Heroic Defence of Leningrad", established in the autumn of 1941. From the temporary break in the blockade in January 1943 onwards the exhibition attracted enormous interest. The museum which subsequently took shape became the focal point for Leningraders' memorialization of their city's tragic wartime story. By May 1949 the exhibition and museum together had received 1,565,300 visitors. This was an astonishing number given Leningrad's depopulation and that the museum had been closed for relatively long periods of time to allow for the reconstruction of exhibits and the halls which housed them.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the Leningrad Affair the Museum was 'temporarily' closed for renovation. S.I. Abbakumov, the head of the wartime exhibition, and Lev Rakov, the museum's first director, were both arrested. Rakov was sentenced to twenty-five years. They along with other members of the museum's staff were accused of having distorted the importance of Leningrad's contribution to the war effort and creating a special myth

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<sup>19</sup> Bidlack, 'Ideological or Political Origins of the Leningrad Affair?' p.91.

<sup>20</sup> On the geographical distribution of purge victims see Tromly, 'The Leningrad Affair and Soviet Patronage Politics', pp.718-19.

<sup>21</sup> Salisbury, *The 900 Days*, pp.571-83, Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.144-46, Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds', pp.216-17.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, p.312.

<sup>23</sup> Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds', pp.189-205.

around Leningrad's fate during the blockade. Malenkov visited Leningrad and the museum in February 1949. One former museum worker recalled Malenkov waving a museum guide book and shouting that the museum was full of anti-Soviet exhibits, and that the museum, "perverted Stalin's role in the defence of Leningrad, that only the suffering of Leningraders is emphasized in the museum, and that the role of the Central Committee of the party in the defence of Leningrad is not presented, etc., etc..." On 18 February 1953, after over three years of work to transform the Museum into an ideologically acceptable version of Leningrad's wartime story, the city soviet ordered that the Museum's collections were either destroyed or redistributed to other institutions. This is usually interpreted as an effort to suppress the materials, rather than an attempt to protect them falling into the hands of propagandists.<sup>24</sup> Over the course of 1949 and Stalin's remaining years virtually all forms of local public memory or commemoration of Leningrad's wartime experience were repressed. Books about the blockade published during and after the event were removed from shops and libraries across the Soviet Union. Discussion of the blockade, apart from stilted propaganda pieces published on or around the anniversary of its lifting, disappeared from the national and local press.<sup>25</sup>

From the Kremlin's perspective, although the threat of political conspiracy was largely imagined, Leningrad appeared to be the epicentre of post-war political opposition. Local memories of the city's wartime experience gave reason for many of its inhabitants to be hostile to the centralized Stalinist state. Reports of anti-Soviet agitation in Leningrad regularly passed across the desks of Stalin, Beria and other political leaders. For example, between 26 and 29 October 1946 police in the neighbouring Volodarski and Smol'ninskii districts discovered six 'counter-revolutionary' posters, either discarded on the street or posted on doors, railings and post-boxes.<sup>26</sup> Anti-Stalinist youth movements were well represented in Leningrad. Between 30 October and 1 November 1948 a total of 144 anti-Soviet leaflets (*listovki*) scrawled in pen and pencil on pages torn from exercise books were discovered shoved into post-boxes or passed onto the doors of apartment blocks across eight of the city's administrative districts. Two students from the Leningrad Technical College of Food

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<sup>24</sup> Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds', pp.245-48; Kirschenbaum, *The Legacy of the Siege*, pp.144-45.

<sup>25</sup> Maddox, 'Healing the Wounds', pp.243-44.

<sup>26</sup> GARF/f.9401/op.2/d.139/l.319 published in Khastov, Naumov and Plotnikova (eds), *Lubianka. Stalin i NKVD - RKGB - GUKP - "SMERSH". 1939 - Mart 1946*, p.35.

Production were arrested. When the apartment of one student was searched sixty-seven copies of anti-Soviet leaflet were discovered hidden in a piano along with a political programme and political tracts for an organization called “The Happiness of the People.”<sup>27</sup> Even if these examples of opposition were fabrications, an attempt was being made to link Leningrad with anti-Soviet activity.

The fact that Leningrad was viewed as a hotbed of political opposition by central government makes the city a particularly important location for examining veterans’ relationship to politics and their political attitudes. Leningrad’s veterans were returning to a community which was convulsed by political instability and turmoil, both during mass demobilization and in the years following their reintegration into civilian society. The climate of political repression and cultural crackdown was a constant background to veterans’ attempts to resume ordinary lives, and must have influenced veterans’ attitudes towards the world around them. The attack on local wartime memories and identities was more explicit in Leningrad than any other major Soviet city, and must have been apparent to demobilized veterans as well as civilians.

But Leningrad is important for another reason. Given Leningrad’s history of opposition to Moscow and its westwards-facing traditions, the city provides a unique location from which to evaluate veterans’ political attitudes. If ex-servicemen were disaffected Stalinists, who were highly critical of the regimes’ re-imposition of an authoritarian political system, as some historians have suggested, then one might anticipate that opposition amongst veterans would be pronounced in Leningrad. As the focal point of post-war political opposition, at least in Moscow’s imagination, one might expect anti-Soviet sentiments to be more vocal or voluble in Leningrad than other cities. Emboldened by the general atmosphere of dissent demobilized Leningraders may have been more willing to express critical views. Even if Leningrad’s veterans were no more critical of Soviet power than those from other cities and regions Moscow’s suspicions of the northern capital and its citizens may have resulted in veterans’ political attitudes being better documented than elsewhere.

### **The Spectrum of Veterans’ Political Views**

As has been argued throughout this thesis Red Army veterans were an extraordinarily diverse social constituency that experienced the difficulties of

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<sup>27</sup> Ts-FSB/f.4/op.6/d.20/l.293-5 in V.N. Khastov, V.P. Naumov, and N.S. Plotnikova (eds.), *Lubianka. Stalin i MGB SSSR. Mart 1946 - mart 1953*. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo materik, 2007), pp.236-37.

demobilization in different ways. Between 1941 and 1945 men and women of all ages, drawn from all regions of the Soviet Union, from all social classes and walks of life, served in the Soviet armed forces. In subsequent years veterans talked nostalgically of the ‘frontline brotherhood’ and how war had united soldiers behind a common purpose. But, the shared experience of military service did not entirely supplant generational, gender, ethnic, regional or class differences. Although Zubkova refers to *frontoviki* as an important new social layer (*novyi sotsium*) specific to late Stalinist society, veterans did not react as a cohesive social group. Nor did veterans share a common philosophy or a common attitude towards the communist party. Veterans inhabited a rich ‘cultural universe’ which contained a vast array of competing influences. Their post-war political outlook was influenced by a combination of official propaganda, individual and collective memories, rumour and word of mouth, visions of the good life abroad and foreign propaganda. As Edele writes veterans’ political ideas ranged from, “an embrace of an idealized version of Western liberal democracy and capitalism to ‘Stalinist’ – with all possible shades of grey between.”<sup>28</sup> Yet much of the existing literature has tended to categorise veterans as either hard-line Stalinists or fervent de-Stalinizers.

The image of demobilized veterans as loyal servants of the Stalinist state owes a great deal to contemporary propaganda, which equated *frontoviki* with politically loyal and highly committed party activists. Newspaper articles often celebrated the contribution that veterans made to local party organizations and campaigns. Post-war novels told the stories of ex-servicemen who mobilized the apathetic communities to which they returned.<sup>29</sup> In part the image of the politically committed veteran fed upon the memory of the role played by Civil War veterans; who were used by the party-state as a tool to introduce Bolshevik ideology and bring the revolution to the countryside.<sup>30</sup> For Soviet historians, like Donchenko writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the manner in which the regime under Brezhnev had co-opted veterans to play a part in enforcing the official memory and patriotic cult of the Great Patriotic War may have made veterans seem more natural supporters of the regime than they had been in the late 1940s.

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<sup>28</sup> Edele, ‘More than Just Stalinists’, p.174.

<sup>29</sup> Here I have in mind post-war novels such as Yuri Bondarev, *Silence: A Novel*, trans. by Elisaveta Fen, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Pavlenko, *Happiness*; Babaevskii, *Cavalier of the Gold Star*. See also Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.49.

<sup>30</sup> Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship*.

More importantly the image of veterans as loyal communists reflected the targeted recruitment of serving soldiers into the Communist Party. Decrees passed in August and December 1941 lowered entry criteria and swept away the formalities for soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle and who wanted to join the party.<sup>31</sup> Approximately eighty per cent of the 8.4 million full and candidate members recruited during the war were from the armed forces.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the war, according to Fitzpatrick, more than three million soldiers, approximately a quarter of the total army, belonged to the Party, most having been recruited to join during the war.<sup>33</sup> During mass demobilization more than 2.6 million party members left the armed forces and joined local party organizations; over 1.8 million of these between mid 1946 and mid 1947.<sup>34</sup> According to Donchenko demobilized veterans came to play a prominent part in local party institutions, where they often accounted for more than fifty per cent of the membership.<sup>35</sup> Former soldiers, especially officers with experience of military command, were often appointed to positions of authority within the party.

For scholars who argue that veterans were beneficiaries of upwards social mobility, party membership provided an example of the close bonds between veterans and the state. According to Amir Weiner's study of post-war Vinnitsa the local communist party contained so many veterans, that it almost became a substitute for an official veterans' organization. Dominated by a group of assertive Ukrainian veterans, controlling an extensive patronage network, the local party became a clique. Advancement in this tight circle of former comrades depended as much on wartime service records as personal merit or ideological orthodoxy.<sup>36</sup> Vinnitsa, however, was a special case that should not be assumed to be representative of a wider Soviet experience. In post-war Leningrad the party was not dominated by demobilized

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<sup>31</sup> For example the candidature period was reduced to just three months. See Alexander Werth, *Russia the Post-war Years* (New York: Taplinger, 1971), p.100 and Gorlizki and Khlevnuik, *Cold Peace*, p.182 note 72.

<sup>32</sup> Cynthia S. Kaplan, "The Impact of World War II on the Party", in Linz (ed.), *The Impact of World War II*, pp.157-80 (p.160).

<sup>33</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Postwar Soviet Society', pp.129-56 (p.136).

<sup>34</sup> Ponomarev (ed.), *Istoriia SSSR s drevneishikh vremen do hashikh dnei. Tom 11*, p.61; T.H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917-1967* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p.27.

<sup>35</sup> Donchenko, 'Demobilizatsiia sovetskoi armii', p.101.

<sup>36</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, pp.43-81.

veterans. Politically committed ex-servicemen, in contrast to Vinnitsa, did not appear to control local patronage networks.

Although the disappointments of demobilization bred cynicism amongst veterans, we should not preclude the possibility that many veterans emerged from the war as idealistic true believers. Indeed, for some veterans the remarkable turnaround in Soviet military fortunes was proof of the superiority of Soviet socialist system and Stalin's personal wisdom. Victory and the relief of survival could be intoxicating for young men. As the veteran Fedor Abramov wrote in 1990; "Drunk with the conceit of victory... we decided that our system was ideal, ... and we not only neglected to improve it, but, on the contrary we were dogmatic about it." Viktor Nekrasov, whose post-war novel *In the Hometown* (*V rodnom gorode*) explored many of the difficulties and frustrations of demobilization, recalled how victory reinforced soldiers' faith in Stalin's personality cult. "We excused Stalin for everything! Collectivization, the purges, the execution of his colleagues, the defeats of 1941."<sup>37</sup> For many veterans Stalin could not be disassociated from the Soviet victory. May 1945 was the apogee of Stalin's personal power. It was not easy for many soldiers to escape propaganda's influence. Agitation was ceaseless. *Politrucks* fought a never-ending battle for soldiers' hearts and minds. While the war awoke critical faculties in some soldiers, others had invested a great deal in propaganda. Inevitably, the Red Army contained its fair share of committed Stalinists.

There is an opposing historiographical position. Not all soldiers found that their faith in the Stalinist system was reinforced by their wartime experiences. Although combat could be painful and traumatic, the Great Patriotic War opened new perspectives for many veterans. At a moment of national emergency and great personal danger Soviet citizens paradoxically came to appreciate their own individual strength and self-worth. In subsequent years many people remembered the war as a release from the repressive tension of the 1930s.<sup>38</sup> Boris Pasternak, for example, wrote in *Doctor Zhivago* of the palpable sense of relief and common purpose created by the outbreak of

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<sup>37</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.32.

<sup>38</sup> See Bernd Bonwetsch, 'War as a "Breathing Space": Soviet Intellectuals and the "Great Patriotic War"', in Thurston and Bonwetsch (eds), *The People's War*, pp.137-53; Tumarkin, *The Living & The Dead*, pp.64-71.

the war.<sup>39</sup> The feeling of personal liberation was not exclusive to members of the intelligentsia. Although writers, poets, composers and journalists were more likely to document this feeling, ordinary soldiers experienced similar emotions. According to Elena Seniavskaia many soldiers experienced the war as a form of ‘spiritual purification’. While fighting for the survival of their country many soldiers felt freer, less inhibited and more independent of the Stalinist system than ever before. Bearing arms in defence of the motherland was intoxicating; many soldiers felt that they were holding the fate of the nation, perhaps even world civilization, in their hands. Young men discovered untapped reserves of strength, initiative and courage in the crucible of war. Ironically one of the most inhuman and frightening conflicts in human history awoke positive qualities in Soviet soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Seniavskaia’s argument, of course, is consistent with her patriotic treatment of the Great Patriotic War.

The wartime atmosphere of relative freedom combined with soldiers’ rediscovered of a sense of agency, reconfigured the relationship between combatants and the state. Members of the frontline generation felt freer and more confident in their dealings with the state than their parent’s generation. In Amir Weiner’s analysis the war bred a new kind of Soviet citizen, “an assertive Soviet individual who held tight to his (and it was mostly his and not her) new right, earned in blood, to define his identity and status based on wartime exploits.”<sup>41</sup> Zubkova goes further, suggesting that the emergence of confident and assertive veterans pre-figured the post-Stalinist thaw. The war awoke in people a capacity to think in unaccustomed ways, and had taught them to challenge the official propaganda truths.<sup>42</sup> The historian and veteran Mikhail Gefter described the feeling of independence generated in 1941 and 1942 as a spontaneous de-Stalinization: “People were suddenly forced to make their own decisions, to take responsibility for themselves. Events pressed us into becoming truly independent human

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<sup>39</sup> Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. by Max Hayward and Manya Harari (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1958), p.453.

<sup>40</sup> Seniavskaia makes these points in most of her work see in order of publication: E.S. Seniavskaia, ‘Dykhovnyi oblik frontovogo pokoleniia istoriko-psikhologicheskii ocherk’, *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, Seriia 8 Istorii*, No.4 (1992), pp.39-51; Seniavskaia, *1941-1945, Frontovoe pokolenie*,; Seniavskaia, *Psikhologiia voina v XX veke*, pp.171-200 and Seniavskaia, ‘Psikhologiia soldata’, in G.N. Sevost’ianov (ed.), *Voina i obshchestvo*, Kniga 2 (Moscow, Nauka, 2004), pp.215-31.

<sup>41</sup> Amir Weiner, ‘Saving Private Ivan: from What, Whom and Why?’ *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol.1, No.2 (Spring 2000), pp.305-36 (pp.317-20 op. cit p.317).

<sup>42</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.18.



beings.’<sup>43</sup> As Service notes it was not that surprising that some of the most prominent critics of the party in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Roy Medvedev, were young veterans in 1945.<sup>44</sup>

The claim that war had created a new Soviet Man was also made by Soviet propaganda. But “assertive Ivan” and the exemplary veterans celebrated in the press were very different creatures. The values and ideas that war fostered in Soviet soldiers were not always welcome in peacetime.<sup>45</sup> Qualities such as bravery, decisiveness, independence and risk-taking were invaluable on the battlefield, but dysfunctional in normal circumstances.<sup>46</sup> As Merridale has observed *frontoviki* were fine for winning wars, but Stalinism required ‘people with the souls of bureaucrats.’<sup>47</sup>

Veterans’ outlooks on the post-war world were strongly shaped by having been exposed to life outside of Soviet borders. Their encounter with a society or societies which were politically, economically, socially and culturally alien provided them with an alternative frame of reference against which to evaluate Stalinism.<sup>48</sup> For the overwhelming majority of soldiers this was their first and only experience of foreign travel, something that would have been unimaginable in the 1930s. The Eastern Front during the Second World War was of course about as far away from a Grand Tour of Europe as could be imagined, but contact with the sights, sounds and smells of capitalist societies nevertheless broadened soldiers’ minds. Allied propaganda and fraternization with civilian populations and American and British servicemen gave the Red Army alternative information about the West. Above all soldiers’ own observations came as a shock. Years later Konstantin Simonov would write of; “The contrast between living standards in Europe and among us, which millions of fighting people encountered was a moral and psychological blow that was not easy for people to bear despite the fact that

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Tumarkin, *The Living & The Dead*, p.64.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Service, *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.298.

<sup>45</sup> Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, p.238.

<sup>46</sup> Seniavskaia, *Psikhologiia voina v XX veke*, p.187.

<sup>47</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, p.306.

<sup>48</sup> See Mark Edele, ‘More than just Stalinists: The Political Sentiments of Victors 1945-1953’, in Fürst (ed.), *Late Stalinist Russia*, pp.167-91. Rósa Magnúsdóttir, ‘The Myth of “Amerika” and Soviet Socialism: Perceptions and Realities in the Postwar Soviet Union,’ *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, Vol.31, No.3 (2004), pp.291-307 (p.299).

they were victors in the war.”<sup>49</sup> Letters home often communicated surprise about the sophistication of German agriculture: the level of mechanization, the quality of agricultural buildings and the condition of livestock. Some soldiers wrote that all farms were equally prosperous and they doubted whether poor farms existed.<sup>50</sup> Inevitably many veterans could not help concluding that the capitalist system was not as inefficient and dangerous as Marxist theory and Bolshevik propaganda had claimed. The swell of anti-kolkhoz feeling and rumours of their abolishment in the summer of 1945 were almost certainly linked to the return of veterans shaken by their encounter with western agricultural prosperity.

The reaction of serving soldiers and demobilized veterans to life beyond Soviet borders prompted concern from both the Red Army’s political administration and civilian party organizations.<sup>51</sup> Once mass demobilization got underway in July 1945 the order to conduct additional political work with soldiers and POWs awaiting demobilization was cascaded down through every level of the party hierarchy.<sup>52</sup> Not only did veterans have to be re-educated about what they had seen, civilian communities had to be prepared to receive these individuals. In Moscow, according to the American diplomat Walter Bedell Smith, posters appeared warning that the judgement of many veterans was, “lopsided, that they were nervous and dazed, and that some would even try to claim that the cities and villages of capitalistic countries provided everyone with a mansion filled with luxuries.”<sup>53</sup>

As demobilization progressed contact with the West came to be seen as a detrimental even dangerous influence. Top secret central party reports expressed concern that young party members, particularly those who had served abroad were being influenced by ‘bourgeois’ western culture, especially allied propaganda publications such as *Amerika* and *Britanskii soizuznik* and western radio broadcasts.<sup>54</sup> It soon became clear that *frontoviki* could not be allowed to remain abroad for long. In the

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<sup>49</sup> Konstantin Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia: razmyshleniia o I.V. Staline* (Moscow: Novosti, 1988), p.91.

<sup>50</sup> Shershianoi, “Germaniia i nemtsy v pis’makh krasnoarmitsev vesnoi 1945 g.”, pp.141-44.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.142.

<sup>52</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.122/d.147/l.180-85.

<sup>53</sup> Walter Beddell Smith, *Moscow Mission, 1946-1949* (London: William Heinemann, 1950), p.280.

<sup>54</sup> RGASPI/f.17/op.88/d.812/l.122-31 (l.125-26).

spring of 1947 the Soviet Military Administration in Germany ordered that all soldiers with two or more years' service in Germany, and anybody who had worked closely with candidates for repatriation were reposted to the Soviet Union.<sup>55</sup> The Stalinist party-state clearly feared the return of disaffected veterans contaminated by the pernicious influence of the West. Seniavskaia and Zubkova both suggest that the return of veterans exposed to the liberal west raised the spectre of a form of neo-Decembrism. Political leaders did not have to look back as far as 1825 and the Decembrist Uprising to appreciate the political threat posed by discontented soldiers and ex-servicemen. The Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the 1921 Kronstadt Uprising, all key moments in the development of a Bolshevik consciousness located in Saint Petersburg, as well as the chaotic demobilization of the First World War and Civil War all provided examples closer to living memory.

The months and years immediately following the war were not necessarily the most auspicious moment for challenging a victorious authoritarian state. To quote Viacheslav Kondratiev: "There was much in the system that we did not accept, but we could not imagine any other kind."<sup>56</sup> It was one thing to grumble about the behaviour of rear-line rats or the perceived injustices of demobilization, but another to voice dissent about the political system. While angry complaints about inequalities in the distribution of jobs and housing were tolerated, discussion about the failings of the Soviet Union's political system was strictly off-limits. The reality that the war led some soldiers to privately question the foundations of Stalinism could not be discussed. This was yet another area of the war's continuing effects on veterans' lives, like trauma, criminality and violence, enveloped by a collective silence.

### **Leningrad's Veterans and Party Membership**

One of the most important sources of information about the political views of Leningrad's veterans are party reports about the level of political engagement amongst newly recruited party members. From the summer of 1945 civilian party organizations across the Soviet Union faced the challenge of assimilating new members. The influx of demobilized party members was especially apparent in Leningrad. The death of so many pre-war party members in the besieged city and on the frontlines dramatically reduced the strength of the Leningrad city party. On 1 July 1945, before the first

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<sup>55</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.306.

<sup>56</sup> Viacheslav Kondrat'ev, 'Ne tol'ko o svoem pokolenii', *Kommunist*, 1990, No.7, 115 quoted in Zubkova, *Russia After the War*, p.26.

*eshelons* of veterans began arriving in the city, the Leningrad party totalled 81,563 full and candidate members.<sup>57</sup> At the beginning of January 1947, just eighteen months later, the party membership had more than doubled totalling 179,147 members. This rapid increase was largely the result of the arrival or return of approximately 92,400 demobilized party members from the army and navy.<sup>58</sup> To put this figure into perspective of the 211,199 veterans demobilized in the city by 1 January 1947, approximately forty-four per cent, were full or candidate party members. Furthermore, demobilized veterans represented just over half of the city's entire party membership. Veterans then were a highly prominent presence in Leningrad's post-war party, more highly represented in this social institution than they were in the population at large. The influx of veterans into the City had, as with almost every aspect of urban life, a dramatic impact on Leningrad's party structures and institutions.

According to published membership statistics approximately fifty-eight per cent of Leningrad's total party membership in January 1946 and January 1947 had joined the party during the war (54,915 members in 1946 and 89,763 in 1947).<sup>59</sup> Demobilized party members who had been recruited during the war often had only the most rudimentary knowledge of Bolshevik ideology and little understanding of the conventions which governed life in civilian party institutions. The brand of communism which soldiers acquired in the Red Army was their own philosophy, rather than a carbon copy of the ideas espoused by political officers. As Merridale writes, "Front-line ideology was strong and deeply rooted, but it was also so distinct from that of the civilian *élite* that it might have been evolving in another universe."<sup>60</sup> When veterans, released from party cells in the army, joined civilian party organizations two very different forms of communism came face to face. For many veterans the polite world of civilian party meetings was entirely alien to life in the trenches. For *frontoviki* civilian party cells must have seemed full of people who knew little and understood even less about soldiers' wartime experiences. In other words they were nests populated by the rear-line rats they so despised. Civilians viewed veterans with equal trepidation, fearing

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<sup>57</sup> S.S. Dmitriev et. al., *Leningradskaiia organizatsiia KPSS v tsifrakh, 1917-1973. Statisticheskii sbornik* (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1974), p.45.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp.90-91.

<sup>60</sup> Merridale, *Ivan's War*, p.199.

that the version of communism practiced by soldiers was a potentially dangerous ideological deviation.

Official histories would subsequently imply that the high rates of recruitment during and after the war were a sign of the local party's success in attracting new members to the cause. Yet contemporary sources confirm that the inexperience of many party members created internal administrative problems. A joint plenum of the city and oblast party executive committees convened on 27 August 1946 heard a report from the First Secretary of both committees, P.S. Popkov. The report painted a bleak picture of party life in the city and surrounding region. Popkov estimated that nearly two thirds of local party membership had joined during the war. Mass recruitment during the war had led to a weakening of ideological standards and party activism. Party organisations were heavily criticized for failing to draw wartime party recruits into internal party mechanisms or active involvement in community work. Many grass roots party organisations were failing to hold regular meetings, resulting in stagnation in party affairs. The 350 members of the Oktiabrskii Railway's party organisation, for example, had failed to hold a single meeting in the last three months. Where meetings were being held a decline in party protocol had been observed. Worse still little was being done to improve the ideological levels of new party members. Few attended party education classes, thereby weakening propaganda which assumed a certain level of ideological understanding. Popkov complained that attempts to increase party membership had been made at the expense of the quality of candidates. The abandonment of individual selection and the approval of almost every wartime application had permitted unsuitable candidates to gain admittance to the party. If there was any doubt that Popkov was primarily talking about demobilized veterans, the report concluded by stressing the importance of conducting political work with demobilized communists. "It is necessary to ensure that they (demobilized party members) are quickly registered, that they are involved in community political work, and all means are taken to help them raise their ideological and theoretical levels."<sup>61</sup>

Coming less than two weeks after Zhdanov's attack on Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, Popkov's report was no doubt part of the Leningrad party's attempt to

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<sup>61</sup> See 'O roste partii i vospitanii molodykh kommunistov – Doklad tov. P.S. Popkova na ob'edinennom plenume Leningradskogo oblastnogo i gorodskogo komitetov VKP(b) ot 27 Avgusta 1946 g', *Propaganda i agitatsiia*, (August 1946) No.16, pp.11-25 (p.12, 17) and 'O roste partii i o merakh po usileniiu partiino-organizatsionnoi i partiino-politicheskoi raboty s voynov' vstupivshimi v VKP(b) (Postanovlenie ob'edinnogo plenuma Leningradskogo obkoma i gorkoma BKP(b) ot 27 avgusta 1946 g.)', *Propaganda i agitatsiia*, (August 1946) No.16, pp.47-52.

demonstrate to Moscow that it was putting its house in order. Although these complaints should be viewed against this political background they nevertheless expressed issues of genuine concern. In part Popkov's report reflected the concerns of an older generation of political administrators for whom the political attitudes and level of activism amongst former soldiers seemed alien. Anxieties about whether the future of the communist party could be entrusted to a younger generation of party members were hardly new. Criticisms about failings in local party life and the inadequacy of ideological education of new party members could have come from any era of Soviet history, and will be familiar to many scholars. The Party's own vision of itself as a highly motivated political instrument represented an impossible dream, as unrealisable in the late 1940s as it was the 1920s, 1930s or the 1950s.<sup>62</sup> More significantly Popkov's report reveals that the party, at least in Leningrad, was well aware that demobilized soldiers were not an immediate solution to the party's post-war cadres problem. Veterans, in contrast to official propaganda and what some historians have subsequently argued, were no more suitable material from which to mould party organizations than other members of Soviet society. It proved much harder to inspire active citizenship in the years following demobilization than it had been to motivate soldiers during the war.

Rather than being dominated by committed ideologues the lowest levels of Leningrad's party organisation appeared to be populated by veterans little interested in contributing to party life. Joining the party was not necessarily a conscious decision. On occasion whole units were conscripted into the party with little choice to decline the offer. Others had joined the party as a means of social advancement, in the hope of bettering their families' and their own personal circumstances. For them party membership and the opportunities which it might create were part of what Dunham termed the 'Big Deal'; in other words the post-war accommodation between the Stalinist regime and a burgeoning middleclass.<sup>63</sup> Time-serving members of the party could not be left unchallenged. On 15 February 1947 a top-secret resolution of the City and Oblast party executive committees discussed details of the exclusion and expulsion of party members. Junior party members recruited between 1942 and 1946 were of particular concern. Out of 2511 individuals expelled from party in 1946 approximately a third, 747 in total, were recent party recruits. Most were demobilized soldiers or re-

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<sup>62</sup> J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.10-37; Vladimi Brovkin, *Russia after Lenin. Politics, Culture and Society, 1921-1929* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.37-56.

<sup>63</sup> Dunham, *In Stalin's Time*, pp.3-23.

evacuees who had lost contact with their fellow communists. This situation was blamed upon the failure of grass roots party organizations to implement the recommendations passed back in August 1946.<sup>64</sup>

These were persistent problems with no quick solution. In mid 1949, in the wake of the Leningrad Affair, the Central Commission for Party Control reviewed the files of over 8000 party members purged from the party in 1948 and the first three months of 1949. It upheld 96.2 per cent of the examined cases as correct decisions. The review was concerned that 1654 members, approximately a fifth of legitimate exclusions, were released from the party because of a lack of involvement in party life.<sup>65</sup> This reflected badly on both individual party members and the wider local party. Yet, it is important to remember that the stated reason why an individual was purged from the party was often a front for more systematic political purges. Personal enmities, false denunciations and outright fabrications all played a role in the decisions to purge party members. The files examined by the Central Commission for Party Control were not necessarily a reliable indication of why party members were excluded.<sup>66</sup>

The report drew a firm connection between war veterans and individuals excluded from the party. Between the beginning of January 1948 and the end of March 1949 the Andre Marti Shipbuilding Factory's party organization dismissed twenty-five party members. Of the sixteen men excluded for alienating themselves from the party fifteen were Red Army veterans.<sup>67</sup> In May 1949 the Central Control Commission found forty-one personnel files of party members in the Oktiabr'skii district party offices awaiting decisions on expulsions. Twenty-seven belonged to Red Army veterans.<sup>68</sup> The report writer also noted that many of the party members submitting requests to leave the party were workers who had distinguished themselves in both the struggle to protect the motherland and the subsequent battle for production.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/ll.21-23 (l.21).

<sup>65</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/l.1.

<sup>66</sup> Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges*, pp.73-74; Fitzpatrick, 'Signals from Below', pp. 831-66.

<sup>67</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/l.1526/l.4.

<sup>68</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/l.8.

<sup>69</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/l.2.

The report also included a number of descriptions of the circumstances in which individual party members left the party. Many of these illustrative case studies involved veterans. Although the behaviour of veterans excluded from the party can not be assumed to be representative of demobilized veterans nor the party at large they were highly represented in the report. These vignettes provide an important insight into the culture of apathy and indiscipline which the Leningrad party faced following the war. This is not to argue that veterans did not believe in the socialist system, in Stalinist goals, or were uninterested in political issues, but rather participation in the regimented political culture of the Leningrad party was anathema. The detailed reasons behind individual veterans' reasons for leaving the party, or distancing themselves from it, further challenge the notion that party membership was a direct source of upward social mobility.

A.P. Makarov joined the party as a candidate member in 1943 whilst fighting at Stalingrad. In many ways he was the archetypal veteran-hero. He was highly decorated, had endured great physical hardship and after demobilization found work as a driver for factory number 272, a typical occupation for ex-servicemen. Party membership had not opened doors for Makarov. In March 1948 he wrote to the party committee at Factory 272 asking to be allowed to leave the party:

“I ask you to exclude me from (the list of) candidate members of the VKP(b), because I am semi-literate. I can't raise my level of political consciousness and I think that I can't get to grips with the duties required of a member of the VKP(b).”<sup>70</sup>

Many veterans found political education tiresome or dull. On top of long working hours, attendance at party meetings and voluntary work it represented an unwelcome commitment. For veterans, like Makarov, with only the rudiments of a basic education political education was also an intellectual burden. But, we should not preclude the possibility that Makarov was cleverly imitating the language of Bolshevik self-criticism (*samo-kritika*) to escape the onerous duties of party membership. Previous chapters have demonstrated Leningrad's veterans' resilience in the face of extraordinary problems. Former soldiers were remarkable in their ability to find ways of circumventing the official framework of housing distribution and employment allocation. It is possible that ex-servicemen were capable of the same flexibility in their dealings with the party.

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<sup>70</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/ll.10-11.



Makarov was far from unique in failing to derive practical advantage from party membership. Surprisingly, the simple act of paying party membership dues proved beyond the means of many veterans. F.I. Ivanov was demobilized from the Soviet Army in 1947. He returned to Leningrad and found work with his pre-war employers at the Andrei Marti Shipbuilding Factory. He had become a Komsomol member in 1943, and joined the Party in 1945. He had been living with friends and relatives for nearly two years, whilst waiting for permanent housing. He was fined several times by the police for not having a valid *propiska*. His requests for help from the factory party committee had been ignored. He had been forced to send his daughter to live with his parents in the countryside. In order to improve his living arrangements, Ivanov had come to an agreement with a construction trust to provide 360 hours of voluntary labour in exchange for a room in a communal apartment. Ivanov had wanted to remain as a party member, but his personal circumstances made paying membership fees difficult.<sup>71</sup> S.I. Konushkin, a veteran of the Winter War with Finland and the Great Patriotic War, was excluded from the party in February 1949. He had been demobilized in 1945, and also found work in the shipbuilding industry. Yet over three years later he was still waiting for his family to be given their own accommodation. Not only was he an excellent worker, he was deputy chairman of his workshop committee, chairman of the comrades' court and was a member of the health and safety committee. Supporting his unemployed disabled wife and their child, whilst lodging with friends and relatives had made it impossible for Konushkin to consistently pay his membership fees.<sup>72</sup>

Other documents testified to the resentments that the requirement to pay membership dues generated. Even long-standing party members who enjoyed relatively good salaries complained about having to pay for the privilege of party membership. In September 1948 a demobilized Lieutenant Colonel who had been a party member since 1930 was called to a party interview to explain his failure to pay his dues. He complained about the difficulties of having to survive on a monthly salary of 1000 roubles, a sum that most veterans would have found generous.<sup>73</sup> Angry complaints by another veteran about the declining purchasing power of his salary, the difficulty of paying his fees, and having to subsist on a diet of just vegetables resulted in him having

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<sup>71</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/l.4.

<sup>72</sup> RGANI/f.6/op.6/d.1526/l.2-3.

<sup>73</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.20/d.470/l.49.

to spend time with a party instructor to have his views ‘corrected’.<sup>74</sup> Although these were the reasons given for disenchantment, it is likely that there were other hidden reasons why veterans resented party membership. Similarly there may have been specific undocumented reasons for these particular veterans being singled out in party reports.

Post-war party membership was not quite what soldiers joining the party on the eve of battle or in the euphoria of victory anticipated. In comparison with the firebrand speeches delivered by frontline orators civilian party life was stupefying. It was characterized by long meetings dominated by protocol and procedure. Actively contributing to party life required a time and financial commitment that many veterans were not prepared to give. Those veterans who appeared to derive little personal advantage from party membership, which had often been presented as a reward for loyal military service, were particularly likely to question why they remained party members. Finding the money for membership fees was more than an inconvenience when veterans were still living in temporary accommodation and working in menial jobs. But, party dues may also have been the pretext for avoiding the onerous duties and responsibilities of party membership. Finally, we should not rule out the possibility that some veterans were shrewdly exploiting the irritations of party life to distance themselves from the party either in the build-up to or immediate aftermath of the Leningrad Affair. Although the culling of the upper ranks of the local party organisation may have had little direct impact on veterans’ lives it is possible that the purge shook many veterans’ faith in the party. Ultimately how Leningrad’s ex-servicemen reacted to the Leningrad Affair must remain speculation, but a reminder of the volatility and dangers of party life may have added to many veterans’ sense of disenchantment and their decision to leave the party.

The relationship between Red Army veterans and the Leningrad Affair is a subject which merits further research. An understanding of precisely how Leningrad’s turbulent post-war political history impinged on veterans’ civilian readjustment would add to the picture of demobilization in this region. At present the archival evidence and existing research permits a few preliminary observations. Although veterans were excluded from the Leningrad party for a variety of reasons, they do not appear to have been a primary target of the post-war purge. As far as can be discerned there were no high-profile veterans caught up amongst the blood-letting. This is a significant in two

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<sup>74</sup> TsGAIPD-SPb/f.25/op.20/d.470/ll.23-24.

main ways. First, in the five years between the start of mass demobilization and the Leningrad Affair veterans of the Great Patriotic War do not appear to have penetrated the upper reaches of the Leningrad city party. Veterans in Leningrad, unlike post-war Vinnitsa, had not succeeded in dominating local client-patronage networks, something which protected them from the worst excesses of the purge. This supports one of the main arguments advanced by this thesis; namely that the Great Patriotic War was not necessarily the agent of upwards social mobility which previous research has suggested. It also helps explain veterans' sense of resentment towards the rear-line rats who dominated local positions of authority. *Frontoviki* had largely failed to convert their status as post-war heroes into social capital. This made the fact that desk rats continued to control political and municipal administration especially galling.

Secondly, the relationship between veterans and the Leningrad Affair reveals something about the progress of turning soldiers into civilians. Another of the main conclusions of this research is that despite the many and varied obstacles complicating post-war readjustment, veterans became ordinary civilians with remarkable success. Former soldiers had to live alongside civilians, do the same jobs, and often share the same privileges and entitlements. By 1949 and 1950, in many ways, veterans were indistinguishable from civilians. However, the Leningrad Affair reveals one potential exception. While the purge of the Leningrad party élite attacked blockade memories, veterans' memories of their war were not a target. Indeed, the official narrative which emerged as a result of the repression of blockade memories privileged the soldiers' experience. The patriotic myths about Soviet victory were only a partial reflection of veterans' memories. But, at least soldiers, unlike blockade survivors, had these myths to draw upon. The horrors of the blockade were all but forgotten. In terms of memory veterans and civilians were perhaps separate entities. This may also explain why ex-servicemen seemed largely untroubled by either the Leningrad Affair or the attacks on Akhmatova and Zoshchenko. If assertive veterans were a potential source of opposition one might anticipate they would object to these prominent examples of the re-imposition of political control. But, these were primarily events which affected blockade survivors. It would be fascinating to know more about how these two conflicting narratives of the war co-existed in post-war Leningrad. With civilians and ex-servicemen living and working in close proximity it would be interesting to know how the tensions between two competing forms of memory were negotiated. Did these

different versions of the war divide families, factory workshops and other groups of individuals, or were they met by awkward silences?

### **Veterans and Anti-Soviet Opposition**

In previous chapters I have examined the sense of resentment expressed by veterans returning to Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast'. Many veterans felt let down that the provisions of demobilization legislation were frequently ignored and that propaganda created a false impression of the realities of civilian life. Against the background of grinding hardship and broken promises many veterans felt that their wartime sacrifices had been insufficiently rewarded and all too easily forgotten. Housing shortages, perceived inequalities in the distribution of employment and the shameful treatment of disabled veterans generated enormous disappointment.<sup>75</sup> Dissatisfaction amongst Leningrad's veterans, however, was rarely insurrectionary. Complaints about the state's handling of demobilization and failures in re-assimilating veterans were not signs of political opposition, but rather ordinary grumbling. Just as party membership was not the same as loyal Stalinism, disenchantment with civilian life was not necessarily anti-Soviet in outlook. Veterans were certainly not unique in complaining about the failings of local government. Low-level carping about the frustrations and hardships of daily life in post-war Leningrad was ubiquitous. Grumbling amongst veterans was part of the process of coming to terms with post-war life. It demonstrated that former soldiers were adapting to the modes of behaviour expected of civilian Leningraders.

Neither public opinion *svodki* nor angry letters intercepted by the military censor contained any convincing evidence of opposition amongst Leningrad's veterans. But, in the years following their demobilization, as the regime gradually regained control of the levers of power, particularly from 1947 onwards, a small number of veterans were arrested and imprisoned in the camp system for anti-Soviet agitation. The prosecutions were brought under the notorious clause 58-10 of the criminal codex. This aimed to root out; "Propaganda or agitation containing a call to overthrow, undermine or weaken Soviet power or to perpetrate counter-revolutionary crimes," as well as the preparation, distribution and/or possession of counter-revolutionary literature. As many veterans were about to find out this was an extremely broad definition that could be applied to a

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<sup>75</sup> For a fuller exploration see Dale, 'Rats and Resentment'.

wide-range of behaviour and actions.<sup>76</sup> Most of which were not anti-Soviet in intention or outlook.

On 7 November 1948 Stepan Ivanovich Kuznetsov was arrested in his apartment in Kronstadt for alleged anti-Soviet agitation. This individual example illustrates many of the key features of 58-10 cases, particularly the dubious nature of the charges and the role these prosecutions played in suppressing local wartime memories. He had served in the Red Army from July 1941 until his demobilization on 5 November 1945. The charges levelled against him hardly made him a convinced opponent of the regime, or a dangerous free-thinking liberal. Earlier in 1948 he had taken a holiday in the village where he had grown-up. When he returned to his job in the Baltic Fleet's dockyards he discussed the state of the collective farms he had seen with his colleagues. Neglected villages and hungry *kolkhozniki* reminded him of previous famines. Kuznetsov's colleagues evidently included informers prepared to bring his 'unacceptable' thoughts to the attention of the security services. Perhaps the most damning evidence of Kuznetsov's anti-Soviet activities was the diary which he had kept whilst serving on the Leningrad front discovered on his arrest. The diary contained descriptions of the suffering of Leningrad's starving civilian population. He recorded his own dislike of army life, drawing attention to his hunger, fear of combat and the tyranny of his officers. He also wrote about the war's terrible impact on his family, including his wife's suicidal thoughts, the manner in which his brother was repeatedly patched up to fight and his brother's eventual death. On 3 March 1949, under the provision of Clause 58-10, Kuznetsov was sentenced to ten years in the Gulag. He served six years of his sentence.<sup>77</sup>

The most important source of information about anti-Soviet agitation cases are the so called 'review files' (*nadzornye proizvodstva*) produced by state prosecutors in the mid 1950s. On 4 May 1954 a Central USSR party decision established a special commission to re-examine the files of people prosecuted for 'counter-revolutionary crimes'. *Nadzornye proizvodstva* files were either the product of the re-examinations of individual files initiated by this committee, or in response to letters of complaint from victims of repression and their families. Between May 1954 and March 1956 procuracy and state security officials re-examined the files of 337,183 people. 14,338 people, a

<sup>76</sup> Ministerstvo iustitsii RSFSR, *Ugolovnyi kodeks* (Moscow: Ministervstva iustitsii SSSR, 1947), p.30.

<sup>77</sup> S.K. Bernev and S.V. Chernov (eds.), *Blokadnye dnevniki i dokumenty*, 2-e Izdanie (Saint Petersburg: Evropeiskii Dom, 2007), pp.268-70.

mere 4.2 per cent, were rehabilitated. A further 153,502 had their sentences reduced, and the cases against 183,681 people were upheld.<sup>78</sup> These files remain a highly sensitive historical source. Neither fully declassified nor totally closed to researchers, they require a certain amount of negotiation to access. Thanks to the efforts of Vladimir Kozlov and his staff at the Russian State Archives an electronic database has been created which enables historians to navigate the hundreds of thousands of cases. The database contains biographical details about the accused and a brief synopsis of the alleged crimes. In recent years a number of historians have made extensive use of these materials to make important discoveries. Vladimir Kozlov's own research into mass unrest under Khrushchev and Brezhnev makes extensive use of these sources.<sup>79</sup> Miriam Dobson has used these documents to shed light on the process of rehabilitating victims of Stalinist repression.<sup>80</sup> Review files form the basis of both Rósa Magnúsdóttir's research into late Stalinist perceptions about life outside of the Soviet Union, particularly popular myths about America, and Mark Edele's research into the political sentiments of Red Army veterans.<sup>81</sup>

Using this rich resource I have been able to assemble a sample of twenty review files relating to alleged anti-Soviet agitation committed by veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast.<sup>82</sup> The sample contains a number of allegations that Leningrad's veterans were voicing complaints about Soviet democracy. Boris Pleskhov was a highly decorated war veteran, who after demobilization found work in the town of Sestroretsk as the director of a factory club. In December 1945 he was arrested for making anti-Soviet remarks about the standard of Soviet elections. An informer reported that Pleskhov allegedly complained that:

“The elections of the USSR Supreme Soviet deputies are just a formal campaign, in fact the deputies were already chosen by the government long

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<sup>78</sup> O.V. Lavinskaia, “Dokumenty prokuratury o protsesse reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii v 1954-1956 gg,” *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, No.3 (2007), pp.38-46.

<sup>79</sup> Kozlov, *Massovyie Besporiadki v SSSR* and Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR*.

<sup>80</sup> Miriam J. Dobson, ‘Refashioning the Enemy: Popular Beliefs and the Rhetoric of De-Stalinisation, 1953-1964’ (Ph.D Dissertation, University of London, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> Magnúsdóttir, ‘The Myth of “Amerika” and Soviet Socialism: Perceptions and Realities in the Postwar Soviet Union’, and Edele, ‘A “Generation of Victors?”’ pp.432-95 and Edele, ‘More than Just Stalinists’, pp.167-91.

<sup>82</sup> All of these files are taken from the archive of SSSR procuracy f.R-8131, op.31. In contrast Mark Edele's sample is derived from the RSFSR procuracy files f.A-461 op.1. In order to protect the identities of any living individuals and their relatives the names of those accused of anti-Soviet agitation have been changed.

ago, all that remains for us is to formally cast our vote and that's it. Whether you want to vote or don't want to vote for these deputies they have long been elected without you. With us deputies aren't elected by the people, but the government itself. But abroad their deputies are elected by the people, who vote for who they want, and here the government decides on a candidate and you vote for him."<sup>83</sup>

Other cases reported that veterans complained about press freedom and freedom of expression. In July 1950 Stepan Fedotov was found guilty of slandering Soviet power and praising Tito's politics. He also expressed doubts about the veracity of the Soviet press. Prophetically he added that, "In our country it is forbidden to tell the truth, and if you do tell the truth they will put you in prison." Fedotov also suggested that Soviet bureaucracy was indistinguishable from Tsarist tyranny; "before the bosses could hit you with a stick, but now they beat you with their pencils..."<sup>84</sup>

Veterans more commonly made critical remarks about the collective farm system and Soviet standards of living. Sergei Gavrikov was arrested in 1950 for "systematically conducting anti-Soviet propaganda" amongst his colleagues at a metal works. The prosecution assembled a catalogue of anti-Soviet phrases allegedly uttered by Gavrikov between 1944 and 1949. A few examples suggest that Gavrikov was far from a dangerous counter-revolutionary. In early 1944 he was accused of having said that; "our leaders live well, but we are rotting here in dug outs, and for what, honestly speaking, I do not know." In 1947 he was overheard complaining that, "the war finished and life was supposed to get better, but in fact it wasn't like that, the state is taking away collective farmers' last bread and they are left hungry although they work from dawn till dusk." Whilst at work in the summer of 1949 he grumbled to his colleagues that;

"In America workers live better than we do, because their work is mechanized, therefore they earn more, they have enough to support their families and dress well, but for us with heavy manual labour a workers' salary is not enough to survive on. I will have to sell my last suit."<sup>85</sup>

My sample of anti-Soviet agitation cases from in and around Leningrad largely supports Edele's argument that the range of political views ascribed to veterans was surprisingly broad. Other sources demonstrate that it was possible for veterans to praise

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<sup>83</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.17,137/ll.7-12 (l.9).

<sup>84</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.26,669/ll.5-7, 21-22.

<sup>85</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.32,266/ll.16-18.

American democracy, curse the hated collective farms and complain about Soviet living standards. Leningrad's veterans were capable of a broad spectrum of political attitudes.

*Nadzornye proizvodstva* files contain vivid details about veterans' lives and attitudes, but they are not quite the transparent window on the mentalities of former soldiers that has been argued. Edele claims that these sources have an authenticity, which seems to rule out the possibility of fabrication by either state authorities or individual witnesses.<sup>86</sup> However, as objective evidence of veterans' political views these sources are seriously flawed. Although it was possible for veterans to think and even say many of the things recorded in these files, in any individual case there is significant doubt that the accused was guilty of the accusations.

Since anti-Soviet agitation prosecutions depended heavily upon denunciations and the evidence of informers the reliability of witness statements must be questioned. In letters of appeal against their sentence many veterans claimed that they were the victims of hostile witnesses who had either invented or misrepresented the cases against them. In February 1951 Aleksandr Popov, an unemployed veteran was prosecuted for having slandered the Soviet state and its leaders in the presence of the residents of his communal apartment, as well as having kept counter-revolutionary literature. Popkov denied these charges. He claimed that not only were his neighbours hostile to him, but they had a vested interest in getting him removed from the apartment. The review of the case conducted in 1955 confirmed this hostility.<sup>87</sup> In other cases veterans found themselves having to refute things they were accused of having said years earlier. Ivan Zharkov was sentenced in March 1952 for allegedly slandering the Red Army's good name, praising the Wehrmacht and life in Nazi Germany; all things he was accused of saying in December 1944. Zharkov later complained that he was on bad terms with the witnesses who testified against him. The reviewing prosecutor agreed, and suggested that Zharkov had probably been unfairly convicted.<sup>88</sup>

Although Edele acknowledges suspicions that cases were sometimes fabricated by hostile informants, he argues that prosecuting authorities were generally aware of the

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<sup>86</sup> Edele, 'A Generation of Victors', p.447.

<sup>87</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.28,240/ll.3-5, ll.12-14.

<sup>88</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.29,179/ll.35-36.



possibility that accusations could be invented by witnesses.<sup>89</sup> This does not appear to have been the case in my sample. Prosecuting authorities seemed little interested in uncovering potentially false, exaggerated or embellished accusations. Indeed they often instigated these allegations and even devised the supposed anti-Soviet ‘slanders’ allegedly uttered by the accused. After demobilization in 1945 Matvei Stepanov returned to work in the Vsevolozhskii district as a driver for the Morozov chemical factory. In 1950 Stepanov was prosecuted for conducting anti-Soviet activity amongst his fellow workers. The case depended upon the testimony of his fellow workers.<sup>90</sup> After his brother sent a letter alleging that the accusations against his brother were false, the case was re-examined. According to Stepanov’s brother, who also worked at the factory, the witnesses who testified against him were a drinking circle, who masterminded an illegal vodka racket. This group allegedly determined to have Stepanov dismissed from his job, because he refused to participate in their criminal activity. This allegation enjoyed some credibility given that many of the witnesses were subsequently arrested or dismissed for acquiring large sums of money at the factory’s expense.<sup>91</sup>

Other parts of the files also seem to have been fabrications. A regular feature of many files are accusations that veterans were listening to American and British radio broadcasts, which provided an alternative frame of reference for their anti-Soviet views. Voice of America began Russian language broadcasts on 17 February 1947, whilst the British Broadcasting Corporation began slightly earlier. Although the Soviet state invested enormous effort in jamming these transmissions it never succeeded in eliminating or deterring private listening.<sup>92</sup> Listening to foreign radio broadcasts often appears to be the least convincing aspects of cases assembled against veterans. The accusations are formulaic and often appear to have been tacked onto other allegations of anti-Soviet crimes in order to bolster flimsy cases. Veterans may well have listened to the Voice of America and other broadcasts, but it seems unlikely that they became enthralled by British or American propaganda. Most veterans probably displayed the same scepticism as that expressed by the architect Harrison Salisbury met at the Kirov opera in 1949.

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<sup>89</sup> Edele, ‘A Generation of Victors’, p.448.

<sup>90</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.40,419/ll.9-12, ll.13-17.

<sup>91</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.40,419/ll.13-17.

<sup>92</sup> Edele, ‘A Generation of Victors’, pp.481-82, Magnúsdóttir, ‘The Myth of “Amerika” and Soviet Socialism’, p.301.

When the press began denouncing Voice of America and jamming radio broadcasts he had started to listen, thinking that, “there must be something to hear, and American truth which was important.” But he was disappointed and disillusioned by what he heard. The new American truth turned out to be illusory. “It wasn’t a truth at all. It was propaganda, American propaganda.”<sup>93</sup>

The importance of these files lays not in what they reveal about veterans’ mentalities, but rather the state’s attitude towards veterans. In the vast majority of cases the threat of genuinely anti-Soviet activity was imagined either by prosecutors, secret policemen or those individuals denouncing ex-soldiers. Based on my sample of cases there is some evidence that ordinary citizens were using accusations of anti-Soviet activity as a means of removing troublesome or unpleasant veterans from their lives. The state, it seems, was equally prepared to accept claims of oppositional intent as a means of rounding up and punishing veterans who had failed to reintegrate into mainstream civil society. Five of the files within the sample involved veterans who were alcoholics, mentally ill or suffering from war-related trauma. In all of these cases the accused were alleged to have made loud drunken protests against the Soviet state and its leaders in public spaces such as markets, bread queues and railway station buffets. My small sample can not claim to be representative of the many thousands of anti-Soviet agitation cases brought against veterans, or indeed other members of society. But accusations that veterans had voiced anti-Soviet thoughts in public may well have proved the most effective means of getting rid of men whose damaged minds and bodies prompted uncomfortable reminders of the war.

The most vivid example concerns a series of anti-Soviet protests made by Iosif Martynov in 1952 and 1953. Martynov, a middle-aged group III war invalid, had been demobilized in September 1945. He had been injured and shell-shocked a number of times. He had lost two fingers on his left hand, sustained nerve damage to his right arm and injured the base of his spine. He was unable to find employment. He claimed that managers refused to hire him because they needed strong and healthy workers. The case revolved around a series of drunken outbursts Martynov made in public spaces. On 21 April 1952 Martynov caused a scandal begging on the platforms of Leningrad’s Vitebsk station and in the station restaurant. A variety of witnesses alleged that he had cried out phrases such as “Stalin is a skinflint”, “Soviet power loves me,” and had also been

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<sup>93</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, *American in Russia* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1955), pp.61-63.

slandering Stalin. In his version of events Martynov claimed to be so drunk that he was hardly conscious. On 5 March 1953, the date of Stalin's death, although the public announcement was not made until 6 March, Martynov launched a barrage of anti-Semitic abuse in a housing administration office. On the morning of 5 March he had given blood. With his fee he bought vodka. Already lightheaded from the loss of blood it was not long before he was blind drunk.<sup>94</sup> Martynov did not present a serious threat to Soviet power. In his case anti-Soviet agitation amounted to little more than the ravings of an alcoholic beggar.

Other cases followed a similar pattern. In February 1951 two veterans were arrested for their drunken behaviour in a Leningrad café. When a radio broadcast about forthcoming elections came onto the café loudspeaker the pair was alleged to have complained about forthcoming elections, to swear about Stalin in the crudest of language and to generally behave like boorish thugs. In their defence both veterans claimed to have been so intoxicated that they had no idea, nor control over what they were saying.<sup>95</sup> In November 1949 Konstantin Polenov was arrested for a drunken rant in Leningrad's Troitskii market. According to witnesses Polenov had approached a queue of between 250 and 300 people and expressed a series of anti-Soviet sentiments. This included the phrase, "Why are you standing here, we don't have any bread and we will never have any under this government." This kind of grumbling was characteristic of bread queues, but since Polenov was an outsider he appears to have been especially vulnerable to denunciation. In his letter of appeal Polenov claimed to be suffering from alcoholism related to wartime trauma. Indeed he had periodically undergone treatment in psychiatric hospitals. The reviewing prosecutor, however, was unconvinced by his claim to have been either too drunk or too unwell to have been conscious of what he was saying.<sup>96</sup>

In August 1952 a drunken Vladimir Krymov was alleged to have spread anti-Soviet ideas amongst staff and customers in a central Leningrad shop. He supposedly made anti-Semitic remarks, slandered Soviet politics, party leaders and spread rumours of a forthcoming war. The case file characterized Krymov as an alcoholic who periodically disappeared from work on drinking binges. A letter of appeal written by

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<sup>94</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.39,030/II.5-7, II.8-10.

<sup>95</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.32,018/II.5-7, 35-36.

<sup>96</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.28,280/II.5-7, 13-14.

Krymov's mother in August 1953 attempted to explain that her son was mentally ill and had been undergoing psychiatric help. She claimed that her son had suffered a nervous breakdown as a result wartime shell-shock and the pain of his wife leaving him and taking the children with her. In her words Vladimir was no longer a normal person.<sup>97</sup>

Anti-Soviet agitation cases served a further function. They represented a final stage in what could be termed a 'demobilization of the mind.' By this I mean the process by which veterans' wartime mentalities were gradually replaced by the modes of thought required to succeed in the post-war world. During the war, with the threat of death ever present, soldiers had enjoyed a comparative freedom to talk openly with their comrades. This freedom had limitations and should not be over-estimated. Soldiers knew that their ranks continued to include informers and that denunciation for anti-Soviet crimes remained a risk.<sup>98</sup> The opportunities for relatively open discussion with trusted comrades remained greater than in civilian life. At the same time there were many things that Soviet soldiers had seen and done which they needed to discuss to make sense of. Furthermore, the experience of armed service, as previously discussed, generated a new sense of confidence and status amongst soldiers, which allowed soldiers to voice their ideas more freely. Anti-Soviet agitation cases were part of the process of tightening the limits of public expression in post-war Soviet society. Veterans who were prosecuted for talking too directly about their wartime past, for telling stories about the comparative wealth of Germany or the technological advancement of the American army were not expressing anti-Soviet ideas, but were merely struggling with the shifting limits of public expression in post-war society. Anti-Soviet agitation cases were an important instrument in attempting to map out the boundaries of what could and could not be said in Leningrad. They therefore served the same function as both the *Zhdanovshchina* and the Leningrad Affair. They were intended as an attack on wartime memory, the strong identities forged by the war and freer public expression. If veterans were in any doubt, anti-Soviet agitation cases served to remind them that any special status they might have enjoyed as a result of the war no longer existed.

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<sup>97</sup> GARF-SSSR/f.R-8131/op.31/d.36,641/11.5-7, 16-17.

<sup>98</sup> For examples from the Leningrad front see, Nikita Lomagin, 'Soldiers at War: German Propaganda and Soviet Army Moral During the Battle of Leningrad', *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, No.1306 (November 1998).

### **Ordinary Stalinists**

Veterans just like blockade survivors learned that certain wartime memories and narratives could not be expressed publicly. Reacting to subtle shifts in official policy and language most veterans came to understand where the limits of public expression lay. Combat, fear, killing, death, bloodshed, psychological trauma and early Soviet defeats were all things that Leningrad's soldiers understood were not to be spoken of. With the passing of time the memory of the war ossified into something closely resembling state propaganda. Medals were dusted down annually for victory parades and celebrations, wistful war songs could be sung with old comrades over a bottle of vodka and veterans were asked into schools and colleges to reinforce official myths. But many aspects of wartime memory could not be discussed.

Most veterans were, like Alevtina Ivanova, the central character of *Veteran* a short story published by Boris Vasil'ev in 1984, unable to speak about the terrible physical and emotional cost of the war. Years after the war Alevtina is asked to give a public speech talking about her wartime memories. Her husband advises her to read histories of the war and wartime memoirs in preparation. She finds the stale language and dry topics of these books at odds with her own wartime memories:

“It was altogether a different war, not her war. Alevtina Ivanovna remembered tiredness, which weakened one to sleep, lice on the dead and on the living, the heavy smell of overfilled communal graves, she remembered the charred body of a tank driver in a burnt out tank, a twenty-year old lieutenant with seven strands of hair in a neat hairstyle... young broken bodies: male and female. Stumps torn to shreds, shot through by bullets, broken by bayonets, cut off by knives.”<sup>99</sup>

She resolves to tell her version of the war to the meeting and to do justice to her memories. Yet as she is called to the platform and hears the applause she is unable to express her version of the war. Instead she structures her speech around the formalistic and bombastic language of the patriotic cult of war. Most veterans succeeded in perfecting this Janus-faced relationship with the state and its official narrative of the war. In public veterans repeated the official myths about the war and their demobilization. In private they knew that there was an alternative truth about the war, its conduct and its costs, which could not be spoken of. Veterans, then, were like the rest of late Stalinist society constantly negotiating and balancing their relation with the state with their wartime memories. Whatever soldiers thought about the Stalinist party-state, most gradually learnt the dangers of expressing their wartime memories publicly.

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<sup>99</sup> ‘Veteran’, in Boris Vasil'ev, *Letiat moi koni* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel' 1984), pp.277-92 (p.284).

Here then was the essence of the ‘Stolen Victory’, an idea frequently expressed by veterans in the years and decades after 1945 and developed most fully by Elena Zubkova.<sup>100</sup> Veterans’ hopes and expectations for a better world gradually melted away in the face of extraordinary challenges of post-war life. Vasily Grossman wrote in *Life and Fate* that; “Freedom engendered the Russian victory. Freedom was the apparent aim of the war. But the sly fingers of History changed this: freedom became simply a way of winning the war, a means to an end.”<sup>101</sup> Veterans were exhausted by their experience at the front. Their reserves of physical resistance had already weakened by years of physical stress and psychological strain. But there was to be no respite. Demobilized veterans were rapidly remobilized often into physically demanding jobs. The anxieties of the scramble for jobs, housing and the limited handouts which the state made available combined with grinding hardship also took their toll. Then there were the difficulties of rebuilding family life and learning to live with physical and/or psychological disabilities. Most veterans were simply too exhausted and too preoccupied with rebuilding their personal lives to have either the energy or the inclination to mount a serious attempt to become involved in politics.

As the veteran and writer, Victor Astaf’ev wrote; “The most painful thing was the realization that, because of the strain of the post-war years, we were not going to be able to maintain the high level of moral development which we had achieved during the war, and which we had created for ourselves, in spite of the soullessness and obstructiveness of our own immoral and criminal leadership.”<sup>102</sup> The values which veterans thought they were fighting for, such as freedom, justice and fairness, never materialized. In retrospect many veterans would come to feel that their victory and their right to define the war’s meaning had been stolen from them. Yet, former soldiers were also complicit in this process. The all pervasive post-war patriotism created a conundrum. “War veterans,” as Merridale writes, “many of them still intoxicated with the original idealistic brew and still breathing the old pietism were trapped. They could

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<sup>100</sup> Zubkova, *Russia After the War*. This idea has proved extremely influential, shaping the historiography of how veterans viewed the post-war period as well as how historians have approached the late-Stalinist period more generally; see for example Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin*, pp.195-232; Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, pp.1-12.

<sup>101</sup> Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate. A Novel*, trans. by Robert Chandler (London: Harvill Press, 1985), p.488.

<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Zubkova, *Obshchestvo i reformy 1945-1964*, p.16.

not be unpatriotic and they could not stand against the government.”<sup>103</sup> The official wartime myths then succeeded in binding former soldiers to the regime. In time many veterans found it convenient to pay lip-service to the bombastic war cult, even when they doubted this truth. It was better to keep quiet, accept the better pensions, free travel and collective praise than speak the dark truth about the Great Patriotic War.<sup>104</sup> In Weiner analysis ‘assertive Ivan’, “displayed uncompromising reluctance to let others - the regime included- articulate the defining moment of their lives.”<sup>105</sup> Yet in the years following their demobilization Leningrad’s veterans found that this is precisely what happened; they had been robbed of their right to construct their wartime experience on their own terms.

### **Conclusion**

There is, however, a slightly less pessimistic way of looking at the re-adaptation of Leningrad’s veterans. In many ways, local officials, civilian Leningraders and above all veterans themselves had achieved the impossible. By 1950 veterans in this most challenging of environments for demobilization had succeeded in becoming ordinary Stalinists. As the limited prestige and privilege that existed for ex-servicemen was dismantled veterans gradually blended into the community. The notion that *frontoviki* or veterans more generally represented a special category was shelved. Demobilization, in the fullest meaning of the term, had created a levelling in society. Veterans, who had once demanded respect, glory and recognition, became just other members of late Stalinist society. At the start of mass demobilization the prospect that the men and women physically and mentally scarred by the war could become ordinary civilians must have seemed unlikely. Although they were crammed into unsuitable housing, forced into unfamiliar or unpleasant jobs, and deprived of healthcare many veterans coped with the transition from military to civilian life surprisingly well. Despite the challenging material circumstances and the background of political turmoil demobilized Leningraders had succeeded against all the odds in rebuilding their lives. The process had been far from easy. It had created numerous disappointments, generated deep-seated resentments and produced many victims. The vast majority of veterans derived little material reward for their service, but the conviction that the war had been just and

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<sup>103</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, p.322.

<sup>104</sup> Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, p.323 and Merridale, ‘Culture, Ideology and Combat in the Red Army’, pp.307-8.

<sup>105</sup> Weiner, *Making Sense of War*, p.367.

that they had played a part in a remarkable victory offset the inevitable personal disappointments.

Just as Moscow had succeeded in putting Leningrad in its place and restricting the development of local forms of identity, the Soviet state managed to draw the overwhelming majority of veterans back into mainstream society. Even in Leningrad where the prospect of political opposition was perhaps closer to the surface than elsewhere veterans were no more likely to be critical of the regime. Likewise, Leningrad's veterans were not the ideological die-hards that many ex-servicemen are sometimes presented as. Instead of becoming fierce critics or convinced supporters of the regime, the disenchantment that often followed demobilization led to a declining interest in formal politics. Having survived carnage of the frontlines, veterans quickly learned that in order to survive the peace it didn't pay to become too interested in politics. Many ex-soldiers, like other ordinary Stalinists, retreated into their own personal interests, directing their energies towards making small improvements in their personal circumstances. From talking to veterans, admittedly an unrepresentative group of the youngest and fittest soldiers, I was surprised how uninterested many were in ideology or high politics. For many the lessons of war were deeply personal. Survival had taught some to value opportunities for education, some the value of family and friends and others the simple pleasure of a good meal. With the passing of time veterans would become ordinary members of society. Aside from the ritualized moments of commemoration when soldiers donned uniforms and medals and gathered at cemeteries, monuments and memorials to remember their fallen comrades, they were indistinguishable from any other member of society.



## Conclusion

This thesis has considered the complex transition between war and peace faced by Great Patriotic War veterans in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast. The first five years of peace were defined by the challenge of re-establishing ordinary life in a war-ravaged landscape and a traumatized community. The aftershocks of industrialized warfare were felt in almost every aspect of public life. Demobilization was central to the Leningrad region's post-war recovery. The success in turning soldiers back into civilians impinged upon the lives of almost every member of society. Everybody had a stake in ensuring veterans were reintegrated into the home, family and workplace. The social, economic and political consequences of failing to do so were enormous.

The history of post-war reconstruction has been dominated by studies of the reconstruction of housing and urban infrastructure, and the recovery of industrial and agricultural productivity. However, the transition from total mobilization to post-war normality was not played out on building sites or on the desks of economic planners, but in the daily lives of those who had fought the war. Post-war readjustment, in the sense of how soldiers coped with the physical, emotional and social cost of war, is, if anything, a more important subject for understanding late Stalinist society than the state's ability to mobilize populations for industrialization, collectivization and political campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

Demobilization and post-war adaptation unlock new perspectives on war's continuing legacy. They provide an opportunity to explore how individuals, local communities and nation states responded to the challenges of mass industrialized warfare. The formal reduction in military forces was only the start. The demobilization of mass conscript armies should not be seen as the exclusive realm of military historians. The logistical problem of transporting ex-service personnel home was only part of much wider social challenges. Demobilization affected almost every level of municipal life; including housing policy, economic planning, healthcare and policing. It raised issues of psychological trauma, physical disability, criminality and cultural memory; subjects which military historians have traditionally eschewed.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization. Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-war Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The approach taken to demobilization in the present work also suggests that the neat periodization of wars suggested by conventional military history, needs to be replaced by a more fluid understanding of the transition from war to peace. Armed conflict may have ceased for the over-whelming majority of veterans in May 1945, but for many, if not all, veterans the war was never truly over. Its legacy would influence the rest of their lives. As Vakser reminds us; “The war was in the past, but war also remained. Ruins, photographs of the dead, graveyards, cripples on the streets, the undried tears of mothers, wives and children all contained a constant reminder of war.”<sup>2</sup>

Leningrad and its rural periphery provided an extreme example of the difficulties facing ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen. The city and its inhabitants had a unique wartime experience, which profoundly influenced the course of demobilization. A legacy of extreme violence was closer to the surface in Leningrad than in many other locations. This had several implications. First, there were additional difficulties readjusting to civilian life in a region which had been on the frontlines so long. Second, veterans returned to a community which could also lay claim to special recognition and reward in return for their enormous wartime sacrifices and suffering. In Leningrad veterans’ theoretical entitlements co-existed and competed with the rights of blockade survivors and re-evacuees. Third, and counter-intuitively, Leningrad’s extreme wartime experience facilitated certain aspects of readjustment. Depopulation and destruction created employment opportunities; not necessarily in high status positions, but it was work nevertheless. Although ex-servicemen and women were often in competition for limited resources, an accommodation between them was more easily brokered here than in many other societies. Blockade survivors’ experience of extreme violence partially explains their lack of fears about the potential return of veterans brutalized by combat.

Yet despite all the obstacles placed in the way of Leningrad’s returning veterans the overwhelming majority successfully navigated the transition between war and peace. Most managed to pick up the threads of their pre-war lives relatively quickly. Of course, even when veterans successfully became civilians the war had a profound impact upon the shape of their future lives. But, knowing that they had come through the Great Patriotic War, perhaps the ultimate test, veterans would find the difficulties and frustrations of demobilization more manageable.

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<sup>2</sup> Vakser, *Leningrad poslevoennyi*, p.6.

Demobilization occurred at a number of levels; trans-national, national, regional and local. The present work, however, is primarily a detailed local study. Only a local study can provide the texture of archival material and the clarity of focus to evaluate how soldiers became civilians, free of the distortions of myth and propaganda. Demobilization then was handled differently in different locations. The local perspective challenges many of our pre-existing notions about the treatment and social status of ex-soldiers during late Stalinism. Although demobilization was regulated by a national legislative framework imposed from above, local factors profoundly influenced the success of post-war adaptation. Local bureaucrats made decisions about work allocation, housing provision and the distribution of social welfare; all important factors in demobilization. These officials had a much greater flexibility in managing veterans' reassimilation than previously appreciated. Although local administrators rarely resisted national or regional directives, they frequently imposed restrictive understandings of national legislation. They found ways of reintegrating veterans more quickly, and issued their own policies.

Leningrad, however, provides a unique example of war's deep impact and continuing legacies. While Leningrad has been treated as test case of extreme violence and demobilization, I have shown that aspects of veterans' readjustment were specific. This implies that any study of demobilization based on all-Union generalizations requires reassessment. Previous studies of veterans' post-war lives, based on central archival records, have drawn examples from across the Soviet Union, thereby conflating local conditions and national trends. Since the impression of demobilization which Leningrad fed to Moscow diverged from grass roots records there is good reason to question whether this disparity was more widely manifested. More generally this study suggests a number of areas in which our understanding of the Red Army's demobilization and veterans' post-war readjustment requires further review in the light of Leningrad's experience.

One of main arguments I have advanced in this thesis is that the history of veterans' reintegration has been obscured by multiple layers of myth and propaganda. The disparity between the official narrative of demobilization and the reality experienced by Leningrad's ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen has been a constant thread running throughout the present work. The focus on official and popular myths has revealed how narratives about Leningrad's rapid reconstruction, veterans' exemplary status and the bond between combatants and civilians have obscured darker

realities about the difficulties of rebuilding lives in difficult social and economic circumstances. Demobilization was a far more complicated process than these myths suggested. Yet the official image of veterans as exemplary citizens has proved remarkably durable. The images of veterans being greeted by bunting, bouquets and cheering crowds from July 1945 were more palatable than the reality that ex-servicemen were often an uncomfortable reminder of the horrors of modern warfare. In reality resolving the practical barriers to resuming an ordinary civilian life could take years.

Wartime armed service was not an agent of social mobility. In the immediate wake of war Leningrad's veterans were, by and large, not the beneficiaries of enhanced post-war opportunities. Chapters one and two, which examine the allocation of housing and employment respectively, challenge the notion that veterans were a privileged social group united by a shared sense of entitlement. The post-war housing crisis affected all members of society. The slow pace of reconstruction ensured that housing shortages persisted for decades. In the interim returning veterans lived in communal apartments or dormitories, in conditions indistinguishable from other members of society. Many were placed on housing waiting lists. Others became embroiled in lengthy legal battles to reclaim their pre-war homes. Veterans were not immediately privileged in decisions about housing allocation.

The prospects of finding post-war employment were somewhat better. There was ample work in building trades and reconstructive industries to keep veterans occupied. However, relatively few veterans were able to secure work which matched their previous skills and experience. Good jobs were hard to come by. Officers especially resented offers of work inconsistent with their social status. Neither was party membership a direct route to social advancement. Demobilized party members were not cushioned from the scramble for suitable housing and employment. More importantly, theoretical privileges and entitlements did not necessarily distinguish former soldiers from the rest of society. Blockade survivors, re-evacuees and veterans enjoyed similar entitlements, which placed them in direct competition for finite resources.

Leningrad's veterans were not a cohesive social group. Rather they were an extraordinarily diverse category, which did not respond to the challenges of demobilization in a uniform way. Different sub-groups of veterans were demobilized in different ways, and faced very different post-war problems. Women, war invalids and POWs had very different wartime and post-war experiences. Furthermore, a veteran's place in the queue for demobilization fundamentally affected their future chances. Since

the Red Army was demobilized by age group, older veterans discharged from the army in the early months of mass demobilization enjoyed a valuable advantage. They, unlike comrades returning during and after 1946, arrived before the best jobs and housing were taken, or before Leningraders became tired of welcoming former soldiers home. Veterans then were also competing amongst themselves for the limited resources. Rather than bringing people together, as patriotic myths suggested, the war's legacy created deeply rooted tensions which damaged post-war social cohesion.

The legacy of extreme violence created more than just practical problems. Finding permanent housing and a rewarding job was difficult and frustrating. Inefficiencies and corruption in official distribution mechanisms generated enormous resentment. But, these short-term disappointments were easier to cope with than the long-term physical and psychological effects of war.

The war's social costs were not simply measured on the balance sheet of lives lost, money spent and destroyed infrastructure. Veterans paid an enormous physical and emotional price for victory. Their minds as well as bodies had been sacrificed for the cause. Although local social security officials imposed a restrictive understanding of disability, almost all veterans found the war disabling in some capacity. Few veterans escaped the war without damaging their health or psychological well-being. On their return most demobilized soldiers were exhausted. They were given little or no time to rest or recuperate. Within days they were back at workbenches, construction sites or behind desks. Any intervening period was usually spent standing in queues or arguing with housing, employment or social-security officials.

Patriotic myths and official propaganda suggested that Red Army veterans were immune to the psychological trauma experienced by combatants of other conflicts and from other societies. This thesis has argued that Leningrad's veterans experienced many of the same psychological difficulties as veterans in European and American post-war states. Different societies and cultures have different ways of dealing with war's traumatic legacy. But, total warfare took its toll on soldiers' minds regardless of nationality.

The response in Leningrad, like much of the Soviet Union, was to ignore the horrors of total warfare, and repress the reality that veterans were destabilized by warfare. Yet it is possible to penetrate the collective silence surrounding these issues. Chapter three demonstrates that the city's psychiatrists were aware, and interested in,

instances of psychiatric trauma amongst serving soldiers and veterans. Chapters four and five indicate that trauma manifested itself in other areas of public life. It was a contributing factor to violent criminality, and individuals suffering from psychiatric disturbances were especially vulnerable to denunciation for anti-Soviet agitation. Veterans' disorientation and dislocation, and their anger, resentment, drinking and disruptive behaviour could also be ascribed to the traumatic effects of war. Physical exhaustion further exacerbated the frustrations of readjustment, prompting angry responses that were familiar amongst all veterans of modern warfare.

Although the social costs of war in Leningrad were obscured by the heroic post-war myths, with the passing of time these myths increasingly fulfilled an important social function. Patriotic narratives helped many veterans to make sense of horrific wartime experiences. As the decades passed the frustrations and disappointments of demobilization gradually faded from memory. By the time that veterans finally received the recognition they deserved they had already entered old age. Their support for the official version of demobilization was secured by improving pensions, welfare support, and the enhanced social status that the cult of the Great Patriotic War offered. This had not always been the case. Things had seemed very different in the late 1940s. But the battle lines had been redrawn. The propaganda and myth-making, which had so rankled in the wake of war, now seemed to offer renewed comfort and pride.

Leningrad was far from an ideal environment in which to demobilize veterans. Few military or civilian planners would have chosen to administer demobilization or treat Leningrad's veterans as they were after 1945. Yet, this case study demonstrates that there was no correct way to turn soldiers into civilians. Even after the most violent conflicts it was not predetermined that ex-servicemen would be unable to readjust to civilian life. Leningrad assimilated a remarkable number of ex-service personnel. Despite the post-war housing crisis veterans settled in Leningrad in their hundreds of thousands. This rapid influx of former soldiers created problems. But, the overwhelming majority of veterans settled down to civilian life with surprising ease. Most were not brutalized or traumatized by combat. Veterans who had experienced life outside of the Soviet Union did not pose a genuine threat of political opposition. Some grumbling about the injustices of demobilization was inevitable. But on the whole veterans were remarkable for their ability to compartmentalize their wartime experiences and devote themselves to post-war reconstruction.

Despite all the administrative obstacles and practical difficulties veterans readjusted with great success. By 1950, with the exception of war invalids, most veterans had rebuilt their lives and were virtually indistinguishable from other Leningraders. Although the treatment of disabled veterans was often shocking, the reality was not as bad as the popular myths about Valaam and the forced street clearances suggested.

How can the relative success of post-war readjustment in Leningrad and the Leningrad oblast be explained? This was not the product of attempts to ensure that veterans were greeted as returning heroes. The majority of veterans were not welcomed home by bunting and brass-bands. Those that were often saw through the propaganda apparatus. Neither can success be attributed to official policy and state welfare. Compared to the American G.I. Bill's generous provisions, Leningrad's veterans were given only the most meagre support. But, as I have previously argued, there could never be an adequate means of rewarding veterans for their achievements and sacrifices. Generous welfare payments were not a guarantor that veterans would return as well adjusted individuals. Nor can the fact that Red Army soldiers returned as victors explain their successful reintegration. Defeat and victory created different challenges for demobilizing armies and societies. If anything victory enhanced veterans' expectations of reward and reform, which intensified their disappointment when these hopes were cruelly dashed.

Part of the explanation lies in those factors which motivated soldiers to continue to fight. The universal belief that the Soviet Union was engaged in a just war against an odious enemy protected veterans from concerns that they had been damaged by extreme violence. Since they were fighting to protect their homes, families and the Soviet motherland anything could be justified. The decision to rapidly remobilize veterans also contributed to the outcome. Veterans were given no time to dwell upon the darker aspects of the war. From the moment they returned they were encouraged to focus on the socialist-realist future, rather than the past. The hardships of everyday life meant that former soldiers had little alternative but to reintegrate into the home, family and workplace.

Ultimately veterans themselves deserve some credit for the manner in which they re-adapted to normal life after extraordinary events. The Soviet party-state and its local representatives were not the sole agents influencing demobilization's outcomes. Leningrad's veterans demonstrated remarkable creativity and initiative in circumventing

the difficulties of post-war readjustment. Reluctant to work within the official framework, veterans found and exploited whatever opportunities they could to ease their transition.

The more I have examined the survivors of the Great Patriotic War the more I am struck by the achievements and resilience of a remarkable generation. Across the globe the notion that the Second World War was fought by the ‘Greatest Generation’ has been co-opted by nationalists, in order to demonstrate national superiority. This is unfortunate because pain and suffering, like glory and heroism, transcend national boundaries. Although veterans’ achievements have been distorted by memory politics, veterans were still special people. Those interviewed as part of the project were reluctant to accept that there was anything unique about their generation. With their characteristic humility and self-deprecation they pointed to the achievements of subsequent generations. Several explained that they had no choice but to fight. They argued that if total war erupted once more my generation, or its successors, would have to do the same and would demonstrate similar qualities. Let us hope that that this is a hypothesis that will never have to be tested.



**Appendix 1: Map of Leningrad, 1940.**

**Appendix 2: Map of Leningrad and its surrounding territory.**

**Appendix 3: Demobilized Veterans and Employment Levels in Leningrad**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Total Demobilized</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>	<b>Percentage Employed</b>	<b>Reference</b>
15/10/1945	53,815	34,398	63.9	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.6
20/10/1945	54,485	40,464	74.3	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.7
01/11/1945	73,500	52,560	71.5	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.15
15/11/1945	91,067	66,737	73.3	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.11
01/12/1945	118,500	95,842	80.9	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.17/d.1520/l.23
01/03/1946	162,208	141,027	86.9	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.35
01/04/1946	172,537	157,196	91.1	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.143
01/06/1946	171,967	165,030	96.0	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.77
01/07/1946	191,893	180,540	94.1	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.110
30/04/1947	262,267	252,556	96.3	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.226/116-7
31/05/1947	265,192	256,095	96.6	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.136
30/06/1947	267,253	258,548	96.7	TsGA-SPb f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208

**Appendix 4: Demobilization Figures in the City of Leningrad – Gender Breakdown and Officers**

Date	Total Demobilized	Number of Men	Percentage of total	Number of Women	Percentage of total	Number of Officers	Percentage of total	Reference
31/12/1945	143,003	115,068	81	27,935	19	14,487	10	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.3
15/01/1946	151,462	123,149	82	28,322	18	17,515	12	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.7
31/01/1946	157,726	129,075	82	28,651	18	21,150	13	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.11
01/03/1946	165,863	136,927	83	28,936	17	24,496	17	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.33
01/04/1946	172,537	143,275	80	29,262	20	28,663	17	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.41
01/05/1946	177,072	147,605	84	29,467	16	31,507	18	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.73,75
31/05/1946	186,231	156,731	85	29,500	15	34,777	19	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.91
30/06/1946	197,858	168,347	85	29,511	15	37,669	19	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.108
31/07/1946	209,304	179,770	86	29,534	14	41,434	20	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.145
31/08/1946	220,050	192,500	86	29,550	14	46,210	21	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.147
30/09/1946	230,501	200,947	87	29,554	13	50,591	22	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.150
31/10/1946	235,437	205,877	87	29,560	13	53,703	23	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.163
30/11/1946	241,021	211,261	88	29,760	12	56,003	23	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.201/l.180
31/12/1946	246,218	216,440	88	29,778	12	57,089	23	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.2261/l.104
31/01/1947	250,720	220,942	89	29,778	11	58,499	23	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.48
28/02/1947	252,867	223,087	89	29,780	11	59,467	24	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.54
31/03/1947	257,221	227,441	89	29,780	11	60,371	23	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.71
30/04/1947	262,267	232,487	90	29,780	10	61,654	24	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.116
31/05/1947	265,192	235,412	89	29,780	11	62,804	24	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.136
30/06/1947	267,253					63,886	24	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.201
31/07/1947	268,378					64,684	24	TsGA-SPb/f.7384/op.36/d.226/l.208

## Glossary

*Banditizm*: Banditry, armed robbery or criminal activity in organized gangs.

*Blat*: Literally pull, semi-corrupt practices.

*Blokadnik* (plural *blokadniki*): Blockade survivors, usually applied to people who lived through the entire blockade in Leningrad.

*Den' pobedy*: Victory Day. 9 May.

*Eshelons*: troop trains.

*Filtratsiia*: filtration. The screening of POWs and refugees for anti-Soviet elements.

*Frontovik* (plural *frontoviki*): Frontline combat soldier.

FSB: Federal Security Service.

*Gorispolkom*: Executive committee of the city soviet.

*Gulag*: Main Administration of Camps, used to refer to the party of the concentration camp system.

*KGB*: Committee on State Security.

*Kolkhoz*: Collective farm.

*Kolkhoznik* (plural *kolkhozniki*): Collective farmers.

*Kommunalka* (plural *kommunalki*): Communal apartment.

*Komsomol*: Communist Youth League, the youth organization of the Communist Party.

*Kontuzhen*: Shell-shocked.

*Lengorispolkom*: Executive Committee of the Leningrad City Soviet.

*Lenoblispolkom*: Executive Committee of the Leningrad Oblast Soviet.

LIETIN: Leningrad Research Institute of Work Fitness and the Organization of Work for the Disabled.

LIETIN: Leningrad Department of the Scientific Engineering-Technical Society

*Nadzornye proizvodstva*: Case review files – here of anti-Soviet agitation cases.

NKVD: People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

*Oblast*: Province or region. Administrative level below Union Republic.

*Obshchezhitie*: Hostel or dormitory.

*Orgburo*: Organization bureau.

*Osoaviakhim*: Union of Societies of Assistance to Defence and Aviation-Chemical Construction.

POW: Prisoner of War.

*Propiska* (plural *propiski*): Residence permits.

*Raion*: District. Administrative level below oblast or city.

*Raikom*: District party committee.

*Raspredbiuro*: Office for the Calculation and Distribution of Labour Forces.

RSFSR: Russian Republic.

*Samo-kritika*: Self criticism.

*Shofer*: Driver.

*Sovnarkom*: Council of People's Commissars.

*Sovkhoz* (plural *sovkhozy*): State owned farm.

*Sovkhoznik* (plural *sovkhozniki*): Employee of a state owned farm.

*Spetssoobshchenie*: Special-communications.

SVAG: Soviet Military Administration in Germany.

*Svodki*: Summary reports.

*Trudoustroistvo*: Work arrangement or work placement.

*Tylovaia krysa* (plural *tylovye krysi*): Rear-line rat officials who had avoided frontline service having secured cushy jobs in the rear (*teplye mestechki*).

*Uchastnik voiny*: participant in the war.

*Upravkhoz*: Building administrator.

*Vmeniaemost'* (adj. *Vmeniaemyi*): Criminal responsibility.

*Voenkomat* (plural *Voenkomaty*): Military registration offices.

*Voennaia kontuziia*: Shell-shock.

VTEK (plural VTEKi): Medical Labour Expert Commissions.

*Zabota*: Care and attention.

*Zakon o demobilizatsii*: Demobilization law of 23 June 1945.

*Zaiavlenie*: Annoucement, petition.

*Zemlianka* (plural *zemlianki*): Temporary housing in dugouts and other makeshift shelters/

*Zhaloba* (plural *Zhaloby*): Formal letter of complaint

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